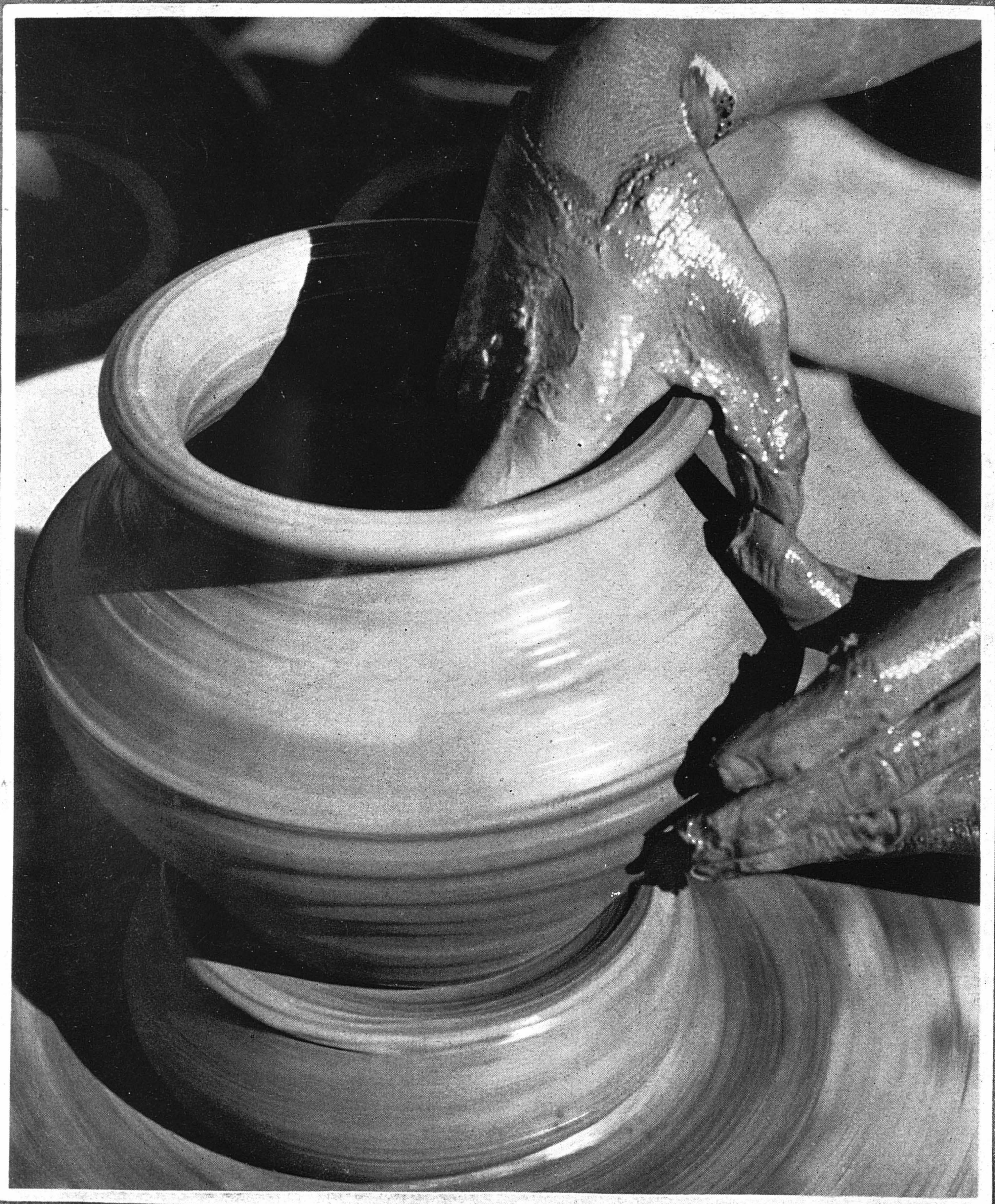
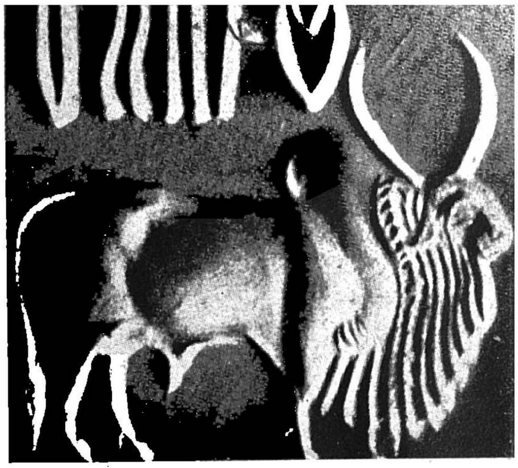
INDIAN HANDICRAFTS

INDIAN HANDICRAFTS

THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India





Seal from Mohenjo-daro

Introduction

Indian handicrafts reveal the innate artistic taste of the masses and their desire to combine utility with beauty. The people's instinct for the beautiful has been expressed by Indian craftsmen in an infinite variety of forms. The brocades of Banaras and Murshidabad, the jewellery of Jaipur, the ivories of Mysore, the glazed pottery of Khurja, the glass-work of Firozabad, the inlaid metal ware of Moradabad and Hyderabad, the *papier mache* of Kashmir and numerous other handicrafts of different parts of India have delighted the people of this country for ages and have been admired by those of other lands.

Spinning, weaving and dyeing are among the oldest and best known of Indian handicrafts. From the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* we find that silk cloth and fine muslins were exported from Bengal via Broach to Egypt. It is believed that India supplied the muslin shrouds for Egyptian mummies. Cotton fabrics have been found at Mohenjo-daro. Silk was in use long before the age of the epics. The finest silks and muslins are represented in the paintings of Ajanta.

The razors, chisels, fish-hooks and spearheads found at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa testify to the antiquity of Indian metal-work. At Mohenjo-daro a copper statuette of a dancer was found which reveals excellent casting by the *cire perdue* process. Bronze and copper vessels excavated at this site show exquisite craftsmanship and though undecorated please the eye. The ancient craftsmen seem to have shared Herbert Read's modern view that form is functional beauty and that the only real justification for ornament is that it should in some way emphasize form.

Ornaments of polished gold and gold cups wrought with gems are mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. Indeed, some of the Taxila finds are similar to the Greek jewellery of the fourth century B.C.

Indian potters from prehistoric times have been master craftsmen as may be seen in the pottery excavated at Mohenjo-daro, in its symmetry and balance, its painted patterns and glazing, whereas the polished black ware found at Taxila may be mentioned as an example of finished pottery of historic times.

The stone vessels and steatite seals with animal motifs, found at Mohenjo-daro, are examples of the ancient Indian art of carving in stone. There are many samples of excellent crystal carving of the Buddhist period before the Christian era.

At Taxila moulded tiles of blue glass have been excavated, while at Mathura and Pataliputra a light green glass has been found. There is no doubt that glass was used by Indian craftsmen in ancient times.

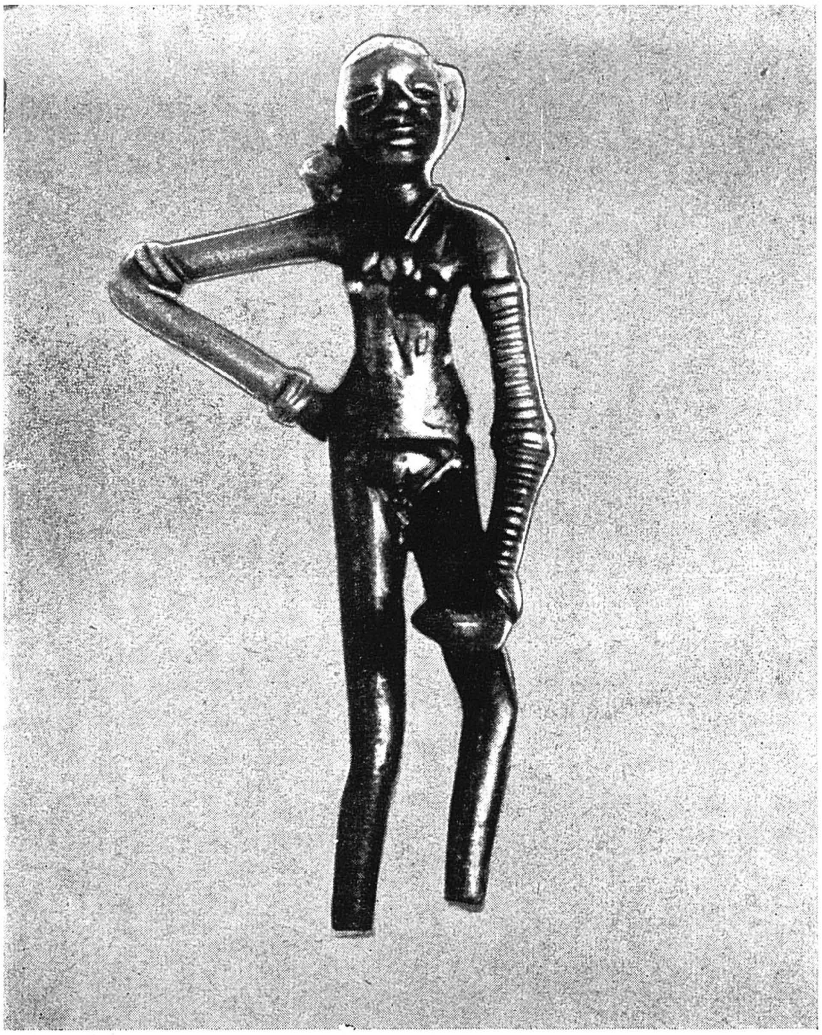
Finally, the Indus Valley sites have shown that carving in ivory was practised in India 5,000 years ago. The decorative value of ivory was recognized at an early age and ivory was used for objects both small and large in a number of ways.

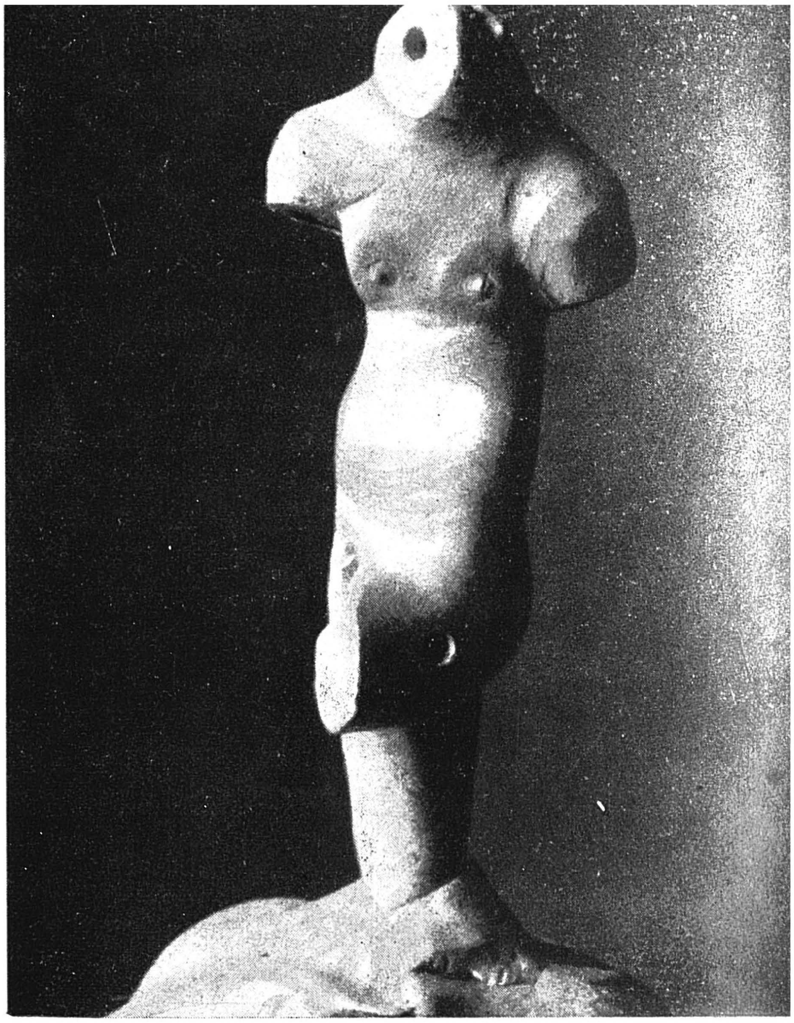
Today in towns and cities, handicrafts are mainly used for decoration but in rural India for centuries they have produced articles of everyday utility. Codrington says, "Where the Western housewife must put up with jugs and basins of a few standard types, the villager's wife is accustomed to having a special pot to her hand for almost every special purpose, and the potter is willing and able to turn them out for her." By and large Indian art crafts are produced in villages where the craftsman knows the needs and tastes of the rural community; where the reputation of his handicraft has been established by generations of skilled forbears; and where living is cheap.

Birdwood writes with zest of Indian handicrafts. His description of the bazar and craftsmen at work deserves to be quoted. "Outside the entrance," he says, "on an exposed rise of ground, the hereditary potter sits by his wheel moulding the swift revolving clay by the natural curves of his hands. At the back of the houses, which form the low irregular street, there are two or three looms at work in blue and scarlet and gold . . . In the street the brass and coppersmiths are hammering away at their pots and pans : and further down, in the verandah of the rich man's house is the jeweller working rupees and gold mohurs into fair jewellery . . . taking his designs from the fruits and flowers around him or from the traditional forms represented in the paintings and carvings of the great temple."

Often cottage industries grow up around some handicrafts such as pottery and toy-making. But there are many cottage industries built around occupations, such as bee-keeping or paddy-husking, which are not related to the arts and crafts. A handicraft is the work of a craftsman who uses manual skill and often traditional technique, his own tools, materials and designs, and depends only on his own labour and what assistance he can get from his family. His independence and individuality naturally find expression in his work. Occasionally craftsmen are employed by a patron or dealer either on the basis of a contract or salary, but are allowed complete freedom to turn out their best work. The Mughal Emperors, Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jehan, were the greatest patrons of the Indian arts and crafts.

No matter how much a country is industrialized it always needs its artisans. A skilled craftsman, conscious of his freedom, loves his craft, whereas a factory worker often comes to hate his work. The craftsman takes a personal interest in the quality of his handiwork : the wage-earner





(Above): *Statuette of a dancing girl, Mohenjo-daro*

(Right): *Torso from Mohenjo-daro*

Silver goblet from Taxila

Bust of a nobleman, Mohenjo-daro

does not. The factory worker cannot take the place of the artisan. In handicrafts the range and variety of form and design will always be much greater than in machine-made articles. In mass production one design must be used a thousand times. The craftsman on the contrary can use a new design every day. Because of their variety and excellence, their artistic value and utility, Indian handicrafts are prized as much in the highly industrialized countries of the world as in India.

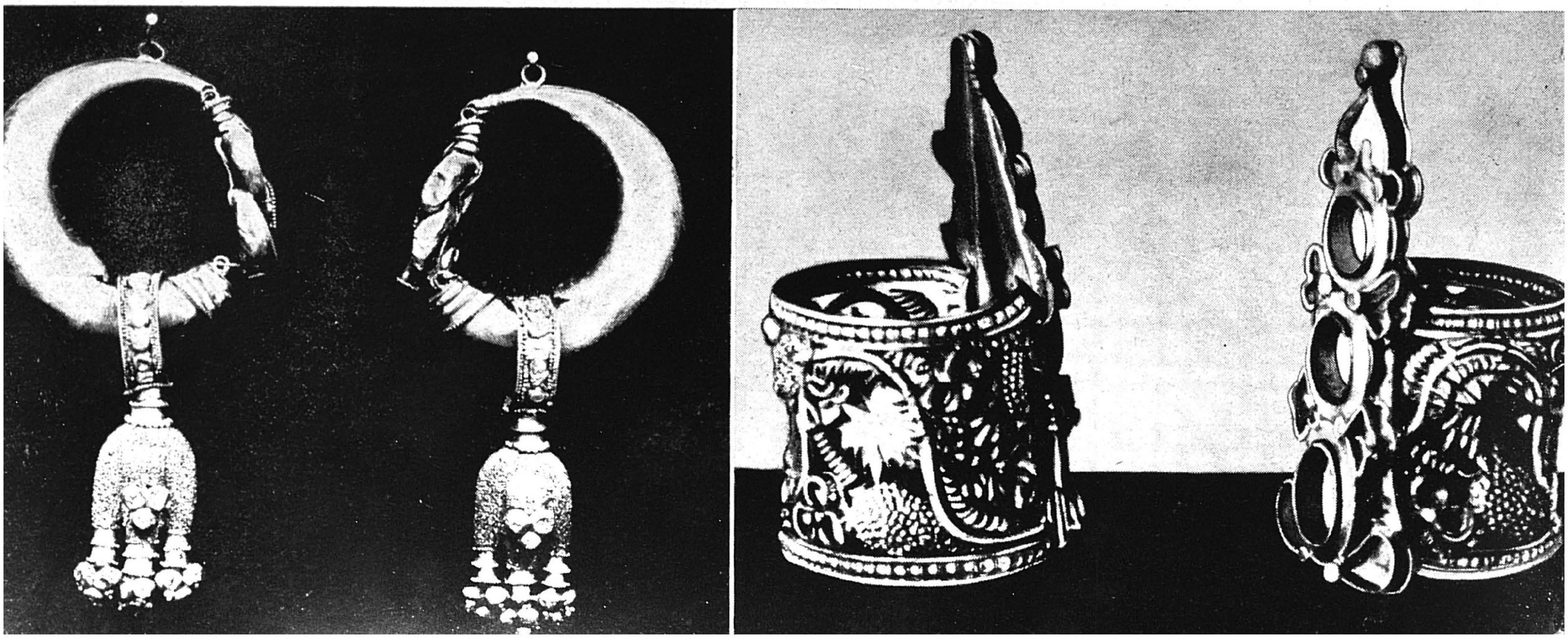
In an article entitled "Advertise your India" in the *Times of India* (February 22, 1939) Kay Austin said, "Handicrafts as in every highly industrialized country, hand workmanship and crafts are highly prized and hence highly paid for. Hand woven textiles, hand stitching and embroidery, hand beaten metal-work, hand carving—all this sort of thing has a premium on it. Even if India did not open a market in America for such things—and this is unlikely—she would provoke interest (and dividends) in them and in her by representation at the Fair."*

Much could be done to popularize Indian handicrafts in foreign countries through showrooms in Indian embassies. If Indian handicrafts find markets abroad the craftsmen will get great financial encouragement and be inspired to produce better work and India will again come to be known all over the world for her arts and crafts. In 1880 Birdwood in his *Industrial Art of India* said, "In India everything is hand wrought and everything, down to the cheapest tools or earthen vessel, is therefore more or less a work of art."

---

* The New York Fair of 1939-40.

Armlets and ear-rings from Taxila



Design on printed cotton from Masulipatam

Textiles

MEGASTHENES had noted that Indians in his days wore flowered muslins of fine weave and princes wore robes which were embroidered in pure gold. Indian silks and brocades, muslins and prints found their way to both European and Asiatic markets. France and England had once to enact laws to keep out Indian fabrics and save their local manufacturers from ruin.

The *kinkhabs* or brocades worked in gold or silver wire are the pride of Indian hand-made textiles. When in pure silk they are called *amrus*; those with gold wire in addition to silk are *kinkhabs*. *Himrus* are brocaded silk with cotton or wool.

Banaras brocades are admired far and wide but the old brocades of Ahmedabad and Murshidabad deserve to be better known. The *himrus* and *mashrus* of Aurangabad, Surat and Ahmedabad have great artistic appeal.

Beautiful gold saris, resembling Aurangabad work, are woven in Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh. Both Trichinopoly and Tanjore *gulbadans* often contain so much gold wire that they may also be called *kinkhabs*.

Till about sixty years ago the Murshidabad weavers alone produced thirty different varieties of silk fabrics. Kashmir silk with its gold filigree or silk embroidery and Mysore silk with vivid colours and touches of gold bring beauty to any scene.

Sangi and satinette are a speciality of Azamgarh, while silk muslins or *tanzeb* is woven at Banaras and Lucknow. Plain silk goods are chiefly produced at Amritsar, and *pagris* at Ludhiana.

Sambalpur is famous for its *tasar* saris, the end-piece and borders of which are dyed yellow, crimson and occasionally blue. Some of the Chanderi (Rajputana) gauzes have remarkably deep silk borders, and are double woven, brilliantly red on one side and deep blue on the other.

The watered silks of Surat, the silk satinettes and *pitambars* of Yeola, the *magia* silk saris and silk brocades of Ahmedabad and the *patola* silks of Baroda and Cambay, are well known. The silk satins of Kathiawar, especially the embroidered ones, are unrivalled for finish and delicacy of colour.

Beautiful saris and handkerchiefs usually in crimson or lac colour are manufactured at Berhampur in Ganjam district. Arni (North Arcot) is also well known for its fine saris, woven in checks outlined with gold threads and black, the meshes being in orange and red.

The districts of Raichur and Aurangabad in Hyderabad are also noted for their saris, more especially the brocades or flowered textiles.

The principal centres of fine cotton weaving were Dacca, Masulipatam and Paithan, noted respectively for muslins, chintzes and *pitambars*. The most famous weavers were those of Dacca. The texture appeared as spider's web, it was "invisible owing to the fineness" when bleaching on the grass, and its different varieties were known by such poetic names as *Ab-i-Rawan* (running water), *Bakt-hawa* (woven air) and *Shab-nam* (evening dew). The weaving of cotton cloth is still a feature of many provinces in India. The *kanawez* or double fabrics of Aligarh are very attractive and the *gabruns* from Agra, locally known as *nakhunas,* have the warp white and the weft striped in various colours. The damasks of Rampur are admirable.

Nagpur, Bhandara and Chanda in Madhya Pradesh and Belgaum, Dharwar and Surat in Bombay are noted for their fine saris which have bold silk borders and charming end-pieces. The blue *palampores* and the *punjan* cloth of Vizagapatam were at one time largely exported to Europe and the West Indies.

Beautiful *kheses* are made in East Punjab, particularly in Karnal, Ludhiana and Patiala. The *lungis* of the Ambala Division are famous all over the East and the glazed *ghati* fabrics of Jullundur are noted for their artistic appeal. Cotton shawls and *pagris* are also woven by the women in Assam and Manipur.

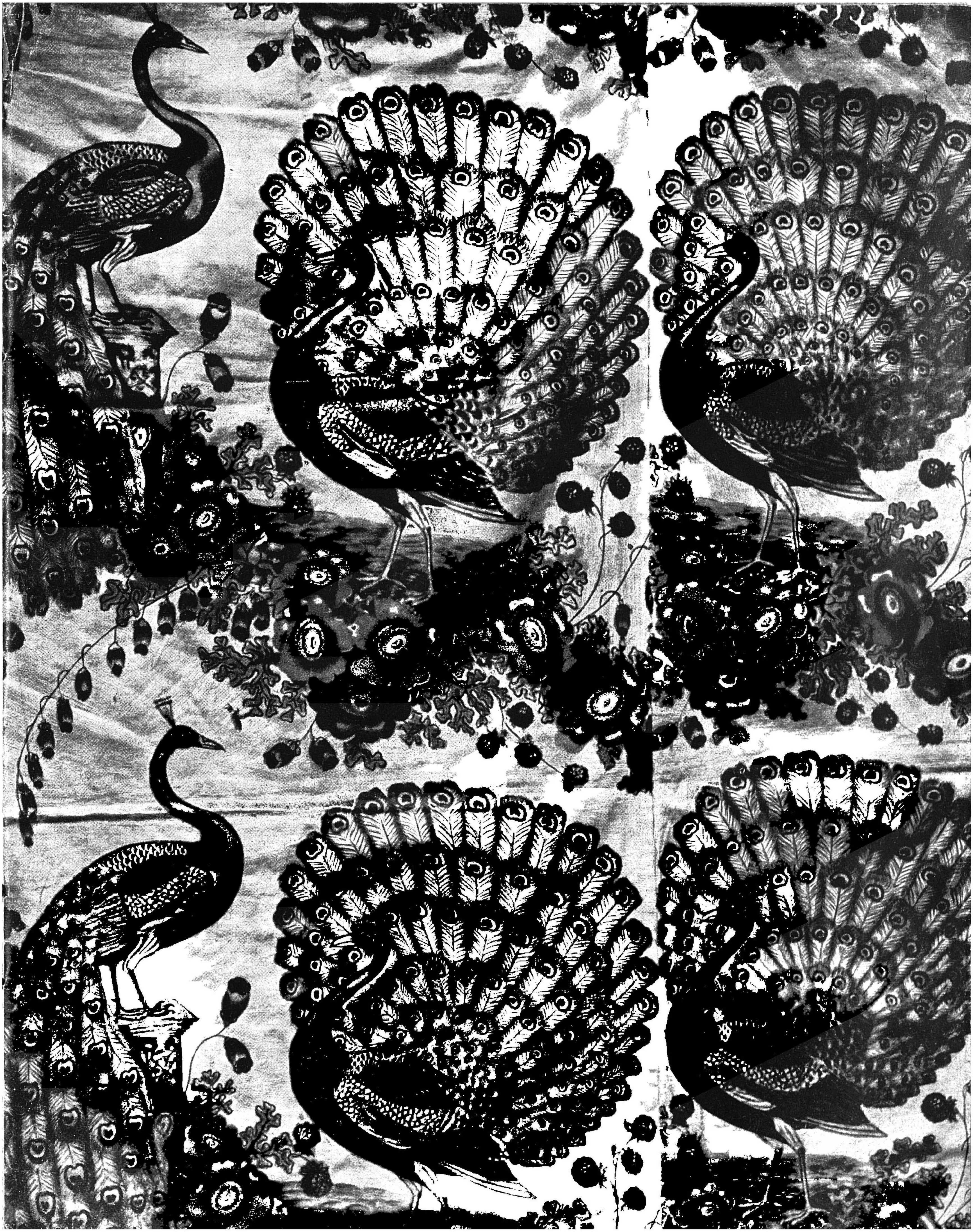
The *jamdani* or figured muslins have been spoken of as the masterpiece of the Indian weaver. The fabric is usually gray cotton, ornamented with blue-black designs and occasionally with brightly coloured cottons and gold and silver wires.

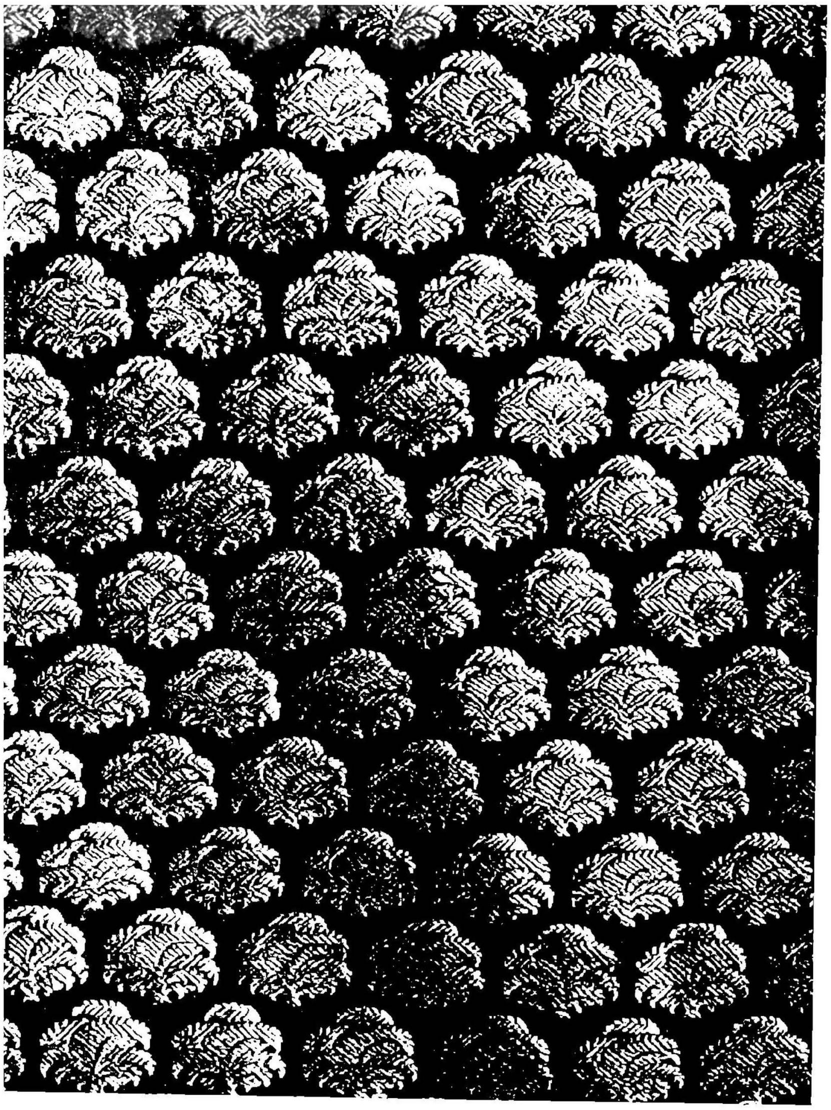
Jamdani is a speciality of Bengal, the chief centres being Nadia and Santipur. Sikandrabad, Mau, Tanda, and Banaras produce striped muslins, known as *dorias* or *charkhanas*. Kotah, Gwalior, Indore, Arni, (North Arcot), Kampti, Madura and Tanjore are also important muslin centres.

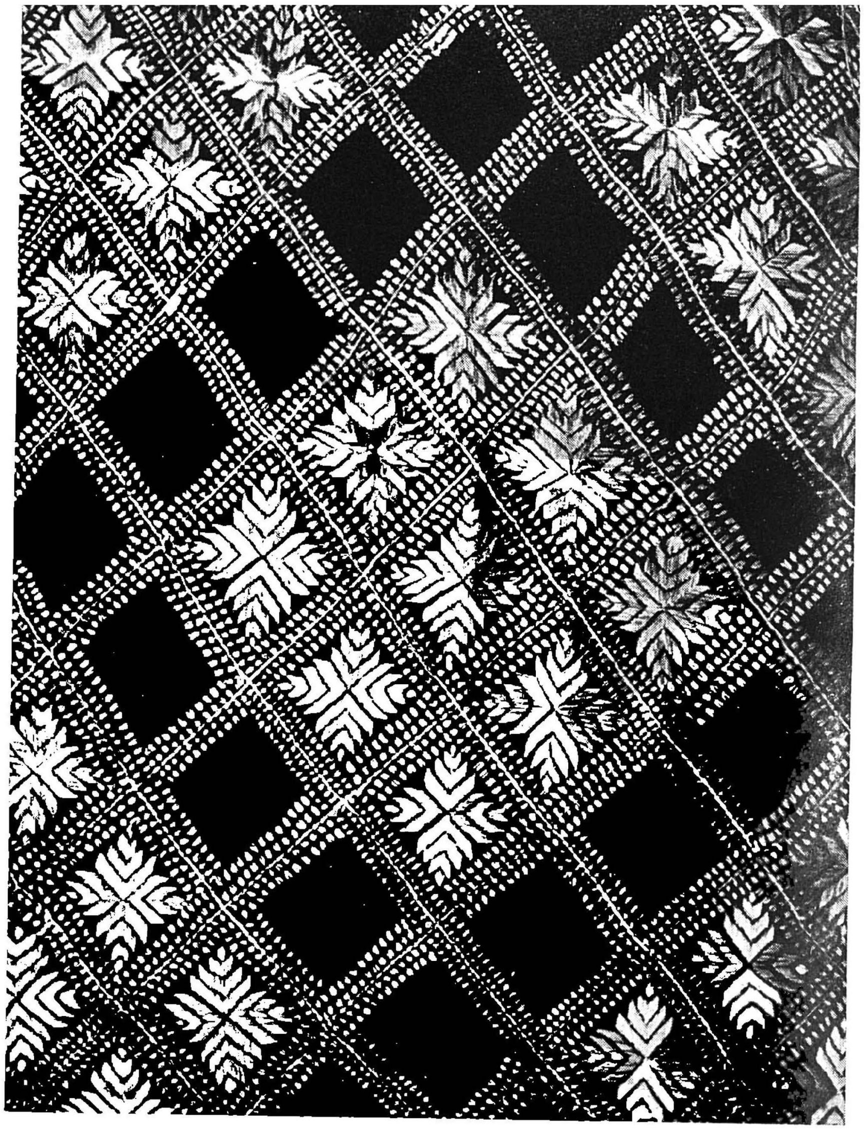
Indian women have always excelled in embroidery. The *kasida* embroideries in gold, silver or *muga* silk of Banaras, the satin stitch *phulkari* embroidery of the Punjab and the chain stitch *shishadar phulkari* of Kathiawar are unique. The peasant women of the districts of Hissar, Rohtak and Gurgaon are well known for this kind of embroidery. So are the *kanthas* of East Bengal made primarily by women. They are really quilts made up of layers of old saris stitched together and then embroidered with symbolic designs.

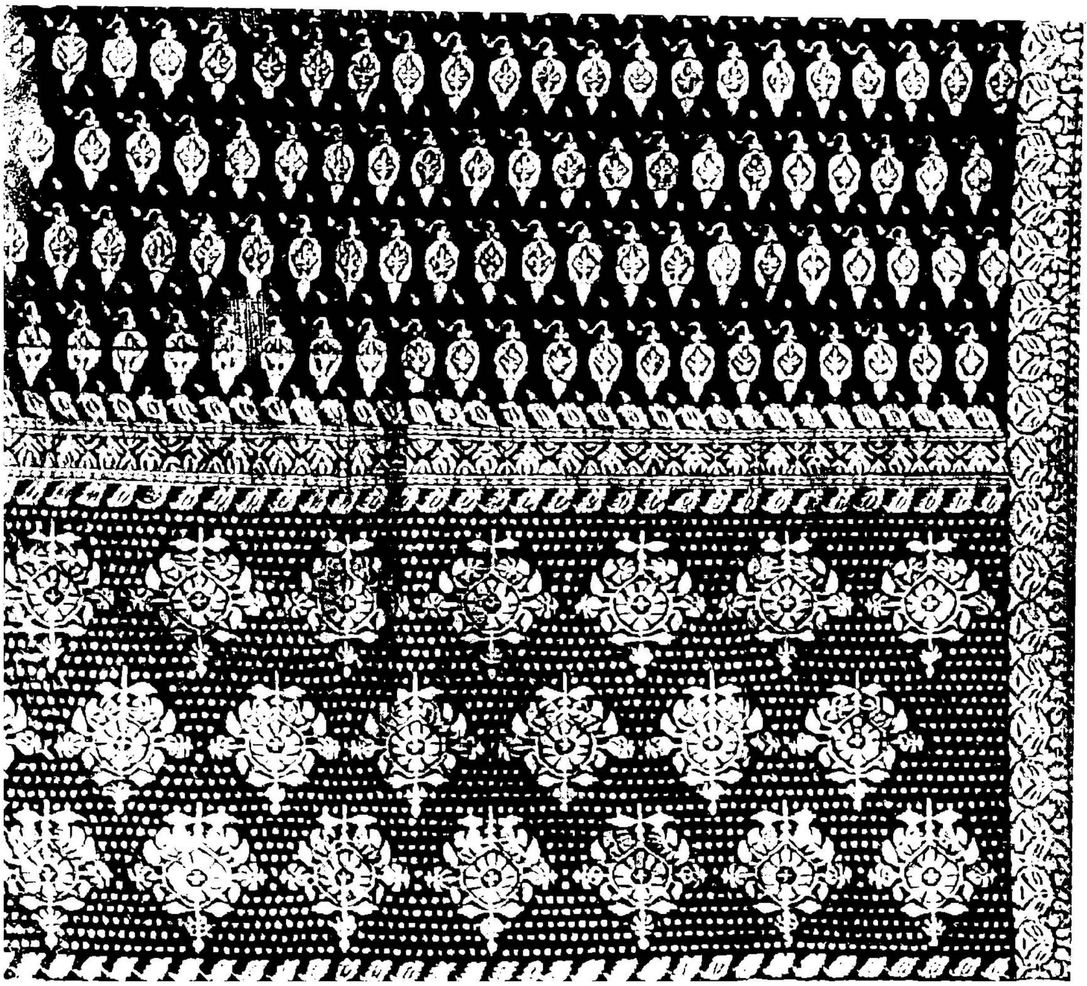
Just as the Indian craftsman in general expresses the people's instinct for beauty, so the Indian dyer expresses in his art the Indian women's love of colour. From the saffron-coloured multipleated skirts and blue veils of the *Jatnis* of Delhi and the glowing reddish brown saris of the Kumbi

Printed silk from Bengal









(LEFT): *Phulkari from the Punjab*

(ABOVE): *Banaras kinkhab*

Muslin with silver flowers

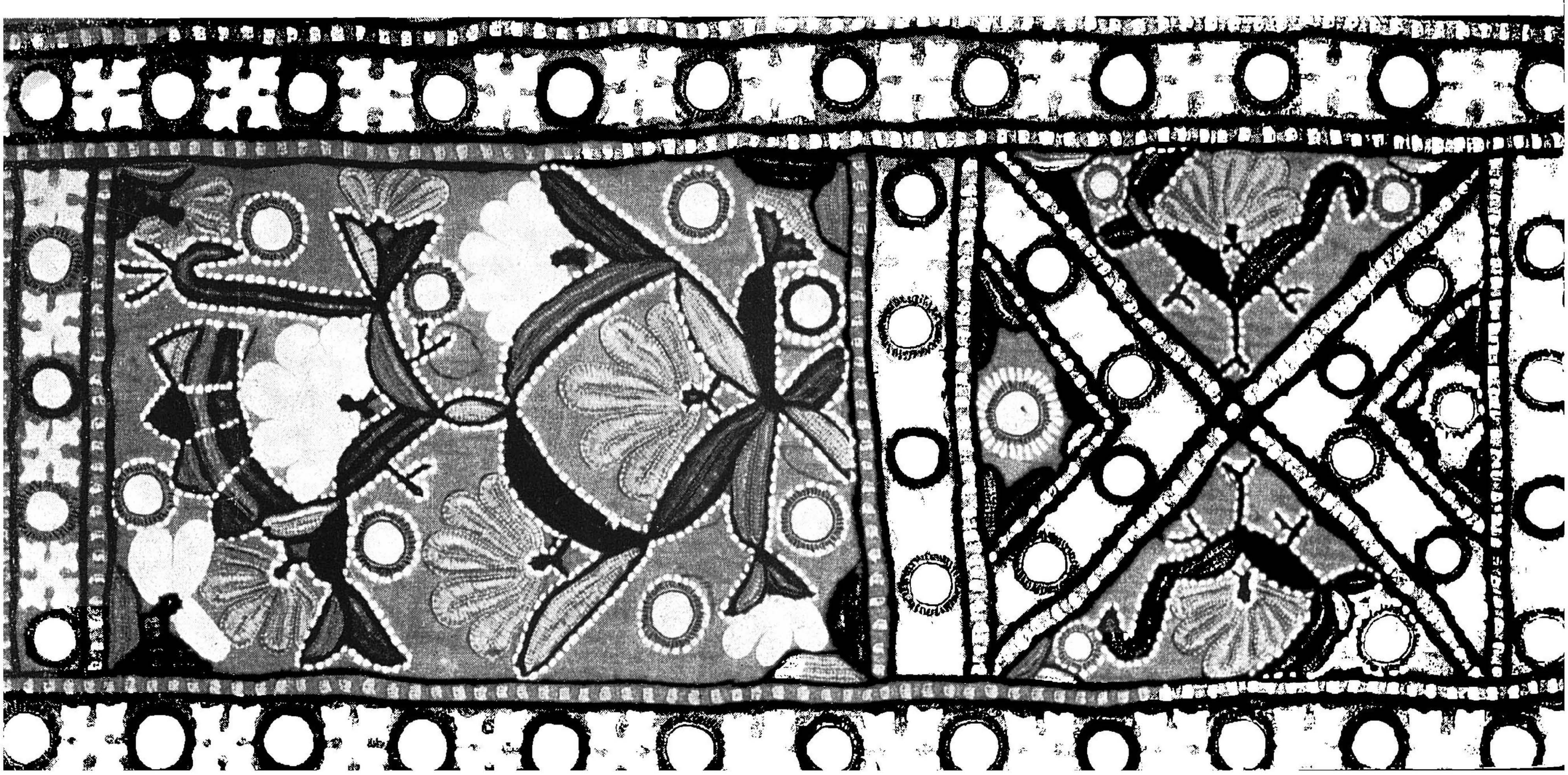
women of the Deccan to the rippling rainbow saris and veils of the women of Rajputana, we see everywhere the enhancement of the dyer's art.

Indeed this enhancement is at its best in the *patola* silk of Baroda often used to drape the Gujerati bride. The technique of double tied-resist dyeing (*bandhana*) is used and before weaving the warp and weft are dyed separately according to the pattern. The favourite colours are a soft, deep-toned madder red, a golden yellow or jet black or sometimes a bottle green. The effect of the rhythmic design and colour blending is charming. This technique of tie-dye is used for muslins chiefly in Jodhpur and Jaipur.

The most highly esteemed dyers in eastern India are those of Calcutta, Darbhanga and Saran. Among some of the aboriginal hill tribes of Assam, this art is carried to perfection. The Nagas are famous for their *manjit* red. Amritsar, Ludhiana and Kashmir are well known for silk and wool dyeing. The skill attained in dyeing the *pagris* in several towns in Rajputana, particularly Alwar and Kotah, is unsurpassed by the dyers of any other part of India. Any two shades are so treated that the effect is perfectly kaleidoscopic and one colour is seen through the other in a most attractive fashion. The dyers of Masulipatam, Chingleput, Salem and Coconada are also famous for their great art in dyeing.

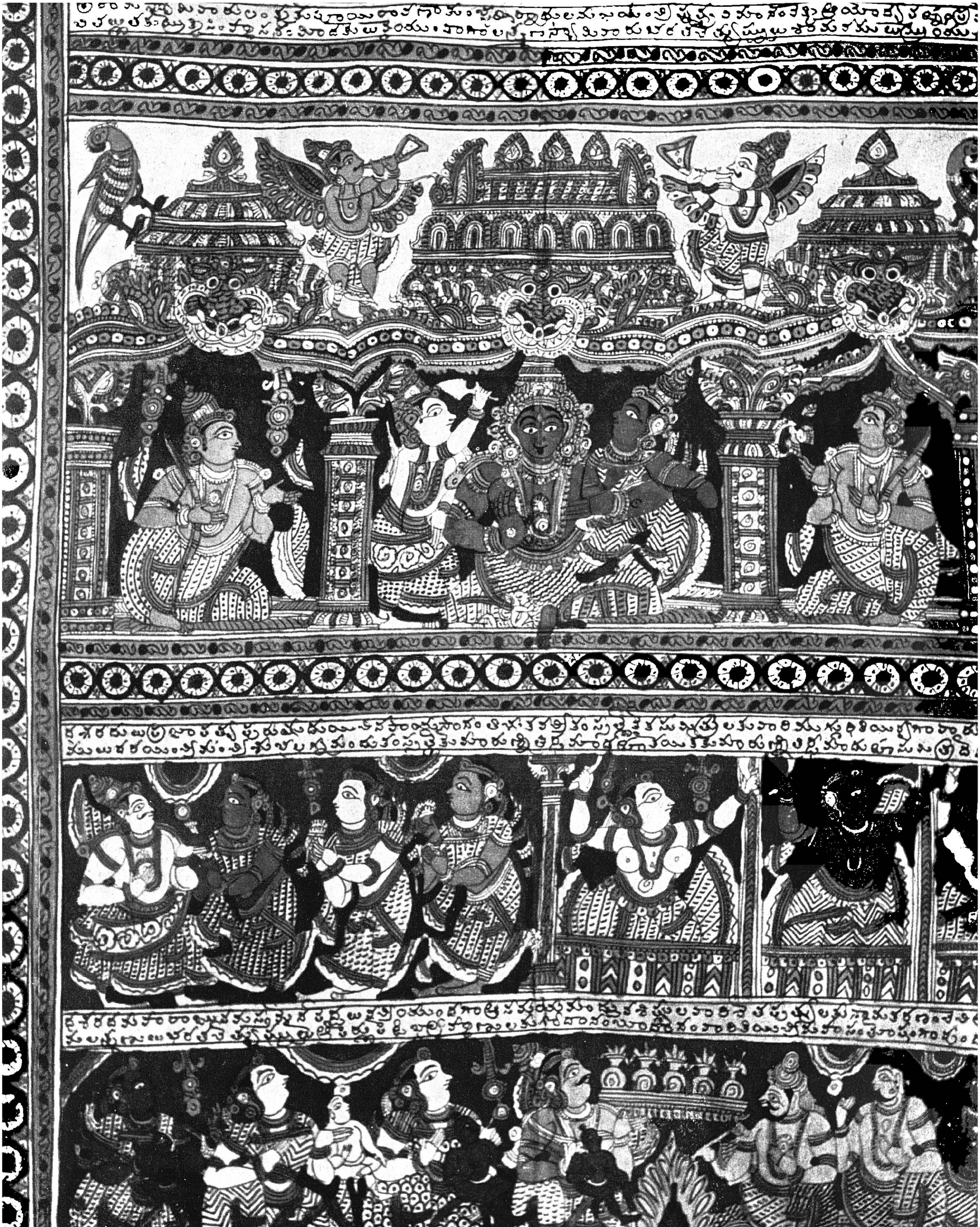
Very many styles of calico-printing are found in India. In Lucknow bed-covers and shawls (*fard*) are the chief articles turned out by the *chipigars.*. Kanauj and Farukhabad turn out bed-covers mostly in bold designs, the "Persian tree of life" being a speciality of the latter. The printed saris of Amritsar resemble very closely in colour effect the rich embroidered or brocaded fabrics.

Embroidery design from Kathiawar



Embroidery design from Cutch

Printed cotton from Arcot

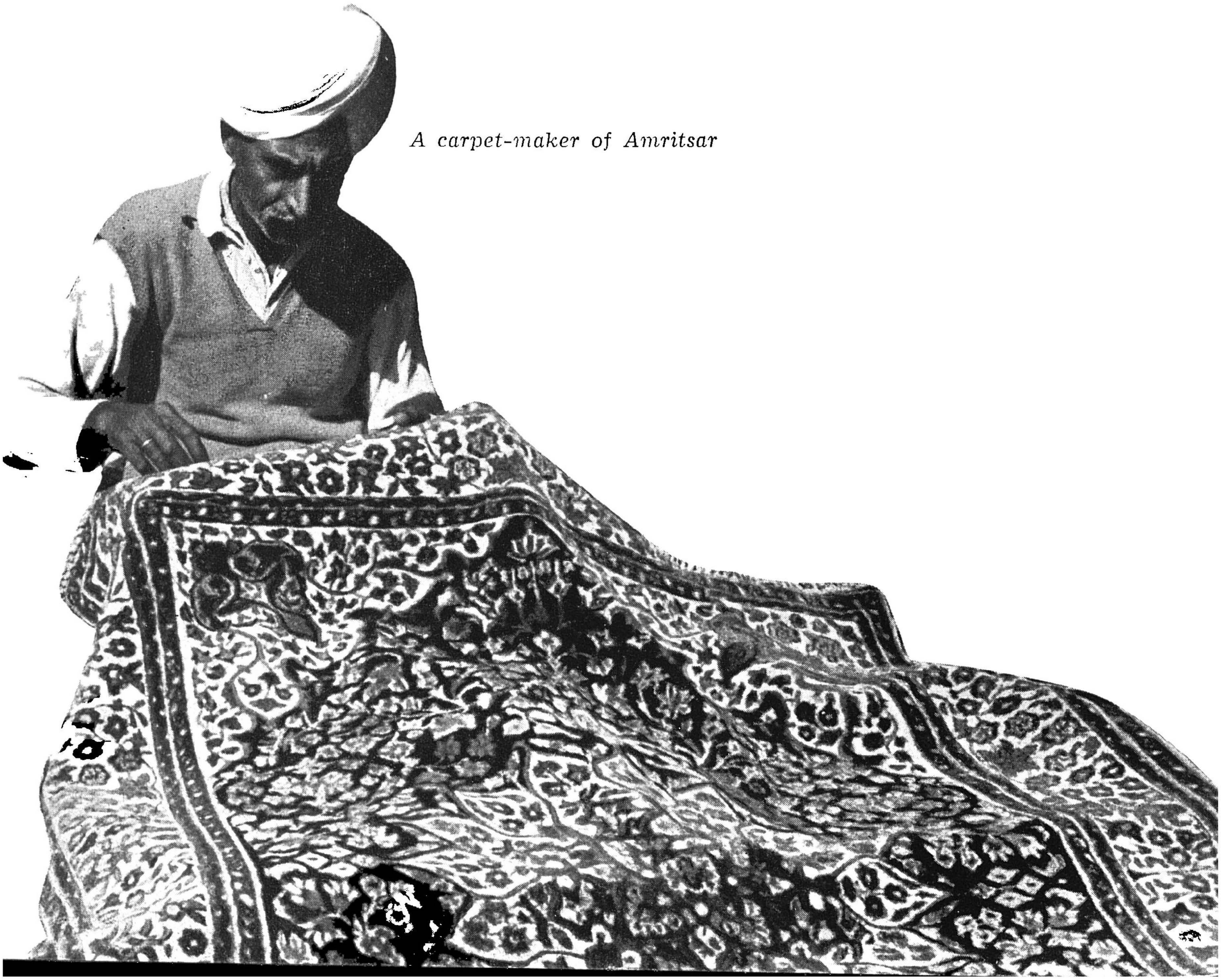


The calicos of Sambar in Jammu are of Persian design and are mostly wall hangings, floor coverings or canopies. Jaipur is the very metropolis of the calico-printing craft so far as artistic conception and technique are concerned. The fabrics are dyed on both sides and the patterns printed in such a way that they appear almost as vividly on the under as on the upper surface. Jodhpur calicos are in strips or pieces sewn together into skirts worn by the women of Rajputana. In Udaipur calico-printing is done on handkerchiefs. Kotah, Gwalior, Ratlam and Indore are other well known calico-printing centres.

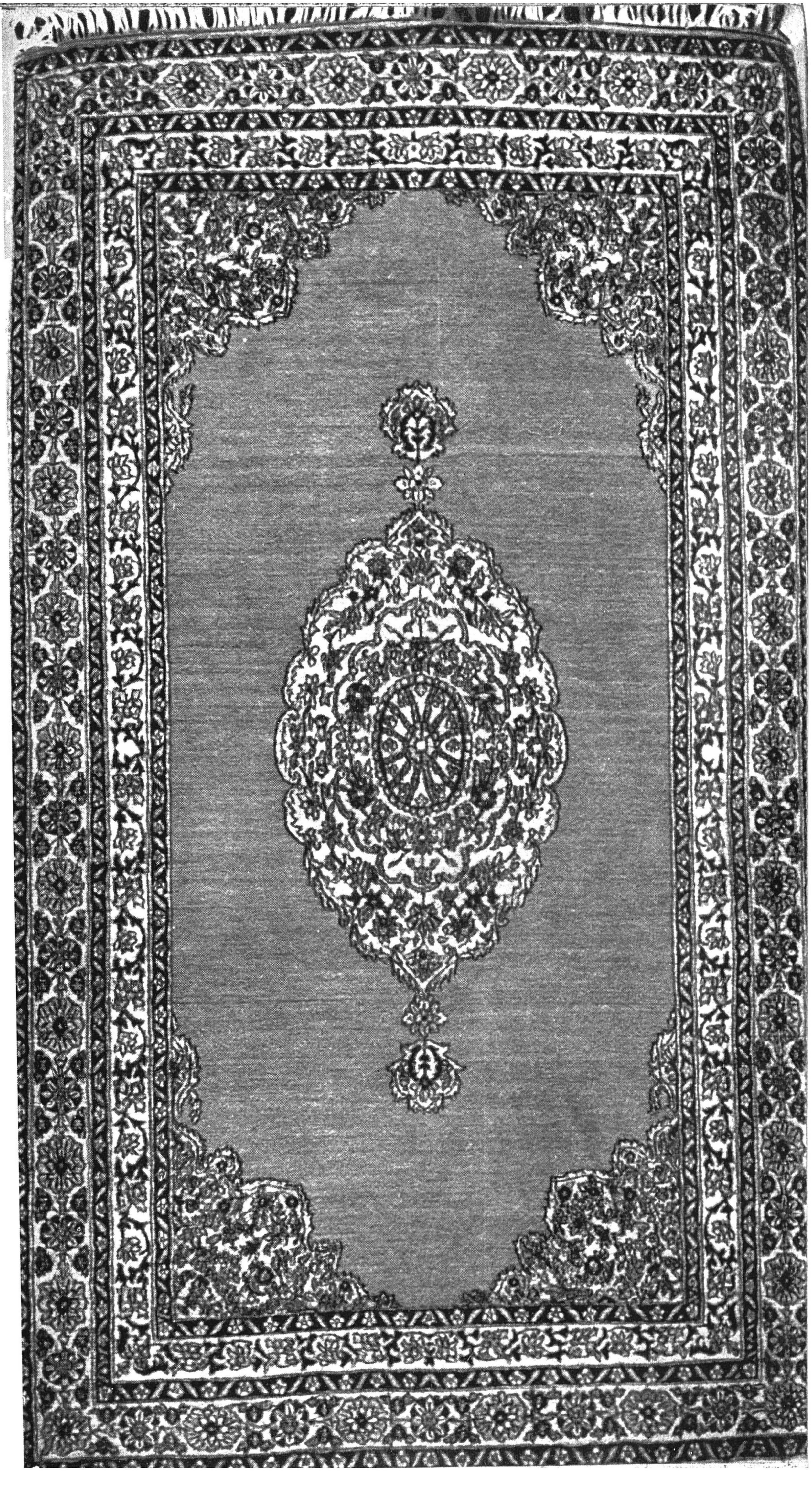
There are good calico-printers in Khandesh, Dharwar, Nasik, Baroda and Kaira. The frequent use of bees-wax as a resist is the most attractive feature of South Indian calico-printers.

The chief woollen fabrics of artistic merit are those made of *pashm* wool, hence called *pashmina*.. These are in the form of *rumals* (scarves). *doshalas, alwans, chaddars,* etc., all used as wraps.

Kashmiri shawls are world famous for their delicate workmanship. Of these, the ring shawl, which can be made to pass through a signet ring,



A carpet-maker of Amritsar



Kashmiri carpet

is the best known and fetches high prices. Amritsar and Ludhiana also produce good shawls.

The other woollen textiles are blankets and felts or *namdas*. The manufacture of blankets is more or less practised in every district in Bombay. Blankets of fair quality are made at Jaipur, Bikaner and Jodhpur, those of Todgarh in Ajmer being the best. Bikaner is also famed all over India for its serges. The *namdas* of Jodhpur and Jaipur are exceptionally fine. They are pure white and are often ornamented by applique work.

Carpet-weaving is one of the most ancient and principal industries of India. From the days of the Mughals, Kashmiri carpets have been extremely popular at the royal courts and palaces; they are noted for their design and craftsmanship. Amritsar is another important carpet-weaving centre. *Pashmina* wool is used for the finest carpets and the work is all done by hand. Jaipur carpets are noted for their beautiful finish, excellent wool and splendid colours. The Vienna patterns are followed in Bikaner carpets and the wool used is of a superior quality. Agra carpets are noted for their enormous weight and solidity.

The Warangal (Hyderabad) carpets are noted for their exceedingly fine count of stitches about 12,000 to the square inch in the finest of them.

The *daris* and *satranjis* are plain carpets and are generally made of cotton. Some of the noteworthy centres are Agra, Bareilly and Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh, Jaipur and Bikaner in Rajputana, Dharwar, Belgaum and Cambay in Bombay, and Vadavedi and Adoni in Madras.

Woollen *daris* and *satranjis*, though not often seen are still made and are much liked. The people of Darjeeling weave thick *chaddars* of white and blue which are very attractive and are important art treasures of the people. The Bhutias of Darjeeling and the people of Nepal also weave strips of thick woollen cloth which are then sewn together; these are largely used as rugs and are very beautiful.

Embroidered jacket worn by Gujerat peasants

Pottery and Glassware

Decorated household pots, Delhi

The potter at his wheel is a common sight in India and has been enshrined in Indian folk-lore and poetry. In conformity with past traditions, and in spite of the absence of good kaolin in the country, the Indian potter displays great inventiveness of form and design. From small *kulhars* or cups in which tea is served on railway stations, and longnecked *surahis* in which water is kept cool in summer, to water pots of various shapes and sizes, large jars for storing grain and glazed *martbans* for preserves and pickles, the Indian potter supplies an infinite variety of useful pottery.

At Alwar and other places the pottery is made of such a thin layer of clay that it is called *kagazi* (like paper). In Aligarh pottery the design is moulded on the surface by the fingers before it is fired. In some places the design is incised or carved on the half-dry surface, but in most cases lines are cut as the plastic material is revolving on the wheel.

Azamgarh, Ratnagiri and Madura are best known for their black pottery. Painted pottery is largely produced in Kotah, Lucknow, Jullundur and Salem. Khurja and Rampur produce glazed rose-bowls, vases, dishes, pitchers, etc., in a deep green-blue with the pattern moulded above the surface. Following Persian models Jaipur produces pottery with an admixture of green leaves and brown and yellow flowers. Kashmir produces an unusual variety of pottery, salt cellars, wall vases and niche jars in rich jade green.

Of painted pottery there are two varieties. One is painted or stained before firing, and the other painted, lacquered or stained after firing. The black and red pottery of Madura, for example, is smeared with lac over the

stained surface. In Rajputana pottery is sometimes coated with many layers of differently coloured lac and the colours can be seen through the pattern.

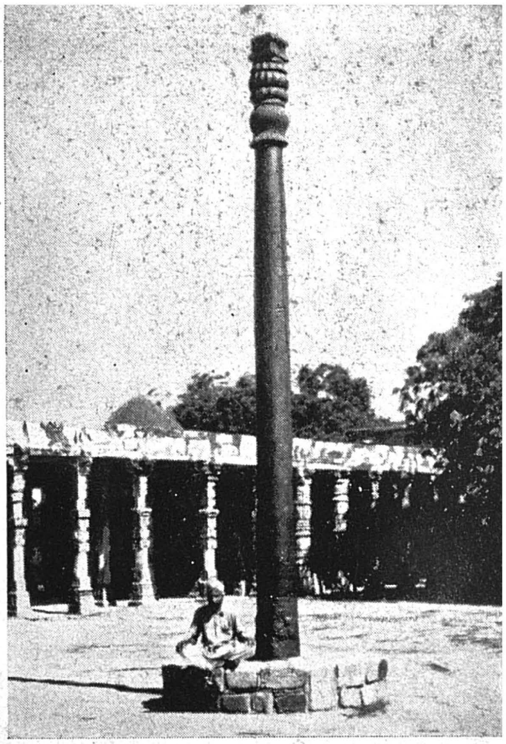
Today Santiniketan is experimenting in brown glazed pottery with paintings in dark colours. It is reviving some of the old motifs, such as the fish, swastika and crab.

It is evident that artistic glassware was produced in India in ancient times and found its way abroad. Pliny declared Indian glass to be superior to all others because it was made of pounded crystal. In the Mughal period glass was extensively used. *Hukka* bowls of beautifully cut glass of this period may be seen in the Indian Museum at South Kensington. Today phials are being made on a small scale at Nagina in the U.P. Firozabad is well known for its fine glass bangles.

A pottery shop in Srinagar

MESTON TRAINING COLLEGE
MADRAS

Metalware



The iron pillar, Delhi

The Iron Pillar at the Kutub Minar in Delhi shows that Indian craftsmen knew the process of making rustless steel in the fourth century A.D. Until some years ago the engraving and carving of iron and steel was an important handicraft, the best work being done in South India and in Rajputana.

The *cire perdue* process of casting copper or bronze was perfected in the South. The image to be cast was first modelled in wax. A thick coating of clay was wrapped round the wax model. Later when the wax model was melted a hollow mould was left in the clay. Into this the alloy was poured. When the metal had cooled the clay covering was removed and the figure finished and chased. These striking bronzes of South India were produced under the inspiration of Shaivism and were orginially made of an alloy of gold, silver, copper, lead and tin. Today only copper is used.

Bidri is a kind of damascene work in which one metal surface is inlaid with another. It takes its name from Bidar its original home. Lucknow, Purnea and Murshidabad are other important centres. Apart from the richness and variety of its designs the beauty of *Bidri* ware lies in the striking contrast between the black base and the metals inlaid.

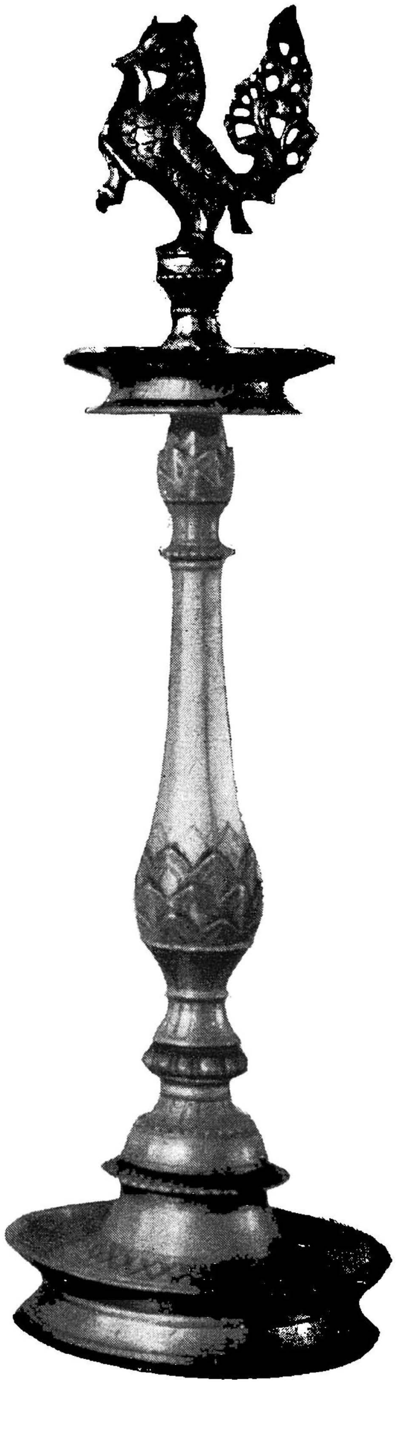
A solution of copper sulphate is applied to the surface of the vessel which turns black. The design is etched on the black surface with a steel point. Then with hammer and chisel the pattern is scooped out and made smooth and very thin pieces of gold or silver plate or gold or silver wire inlaid in the grooves. It is finally polished and the lustre of the inlay stands out against the black surface.

Whereas previously only a few articles, *e.g.*, *hukkas,* betel boxes, goblets, flower vases and trays were made of *Bidri* work, now a whole host of articles are produced which are in demand abroad. Book ends, menu card holders, tea pots, cigarette cases, ash trays, decanter stands,

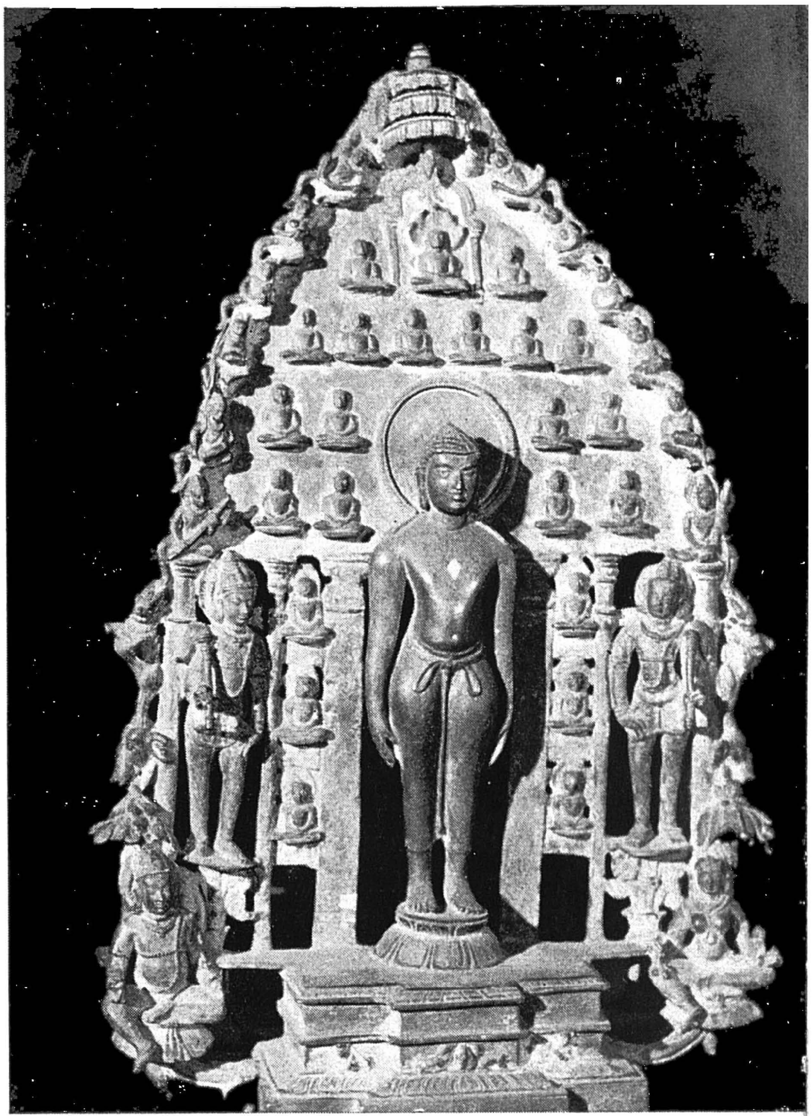
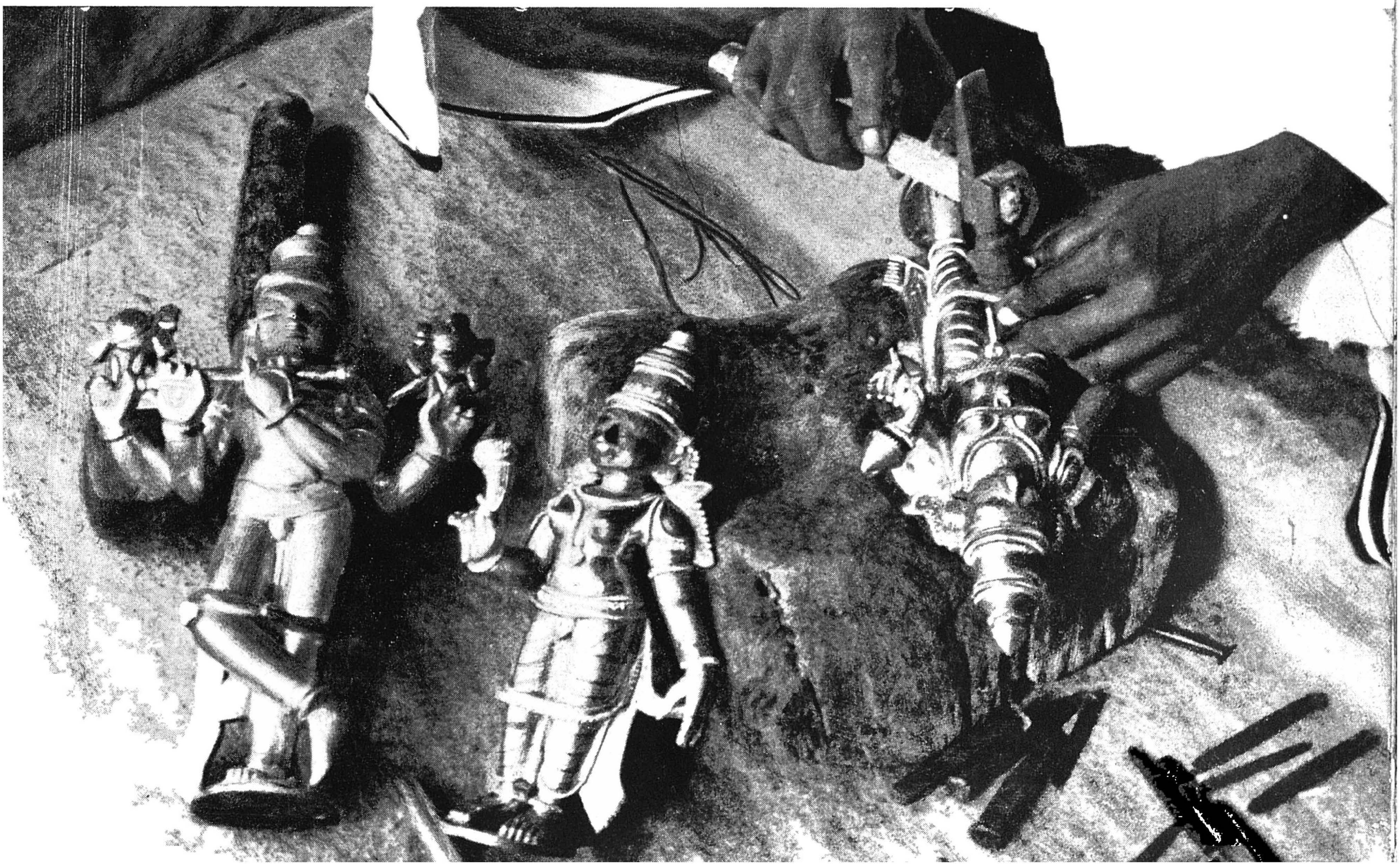
(OPPOSITE)
Buddha from Nalanda

Image of Neminatha, East Khandesh

A South Indian craftsman making bronze images



South Indian bronze : Ardhanarisvara and lampstand

cruet stands, fruit dishes, etc., are all available today in *Bidri* ware.

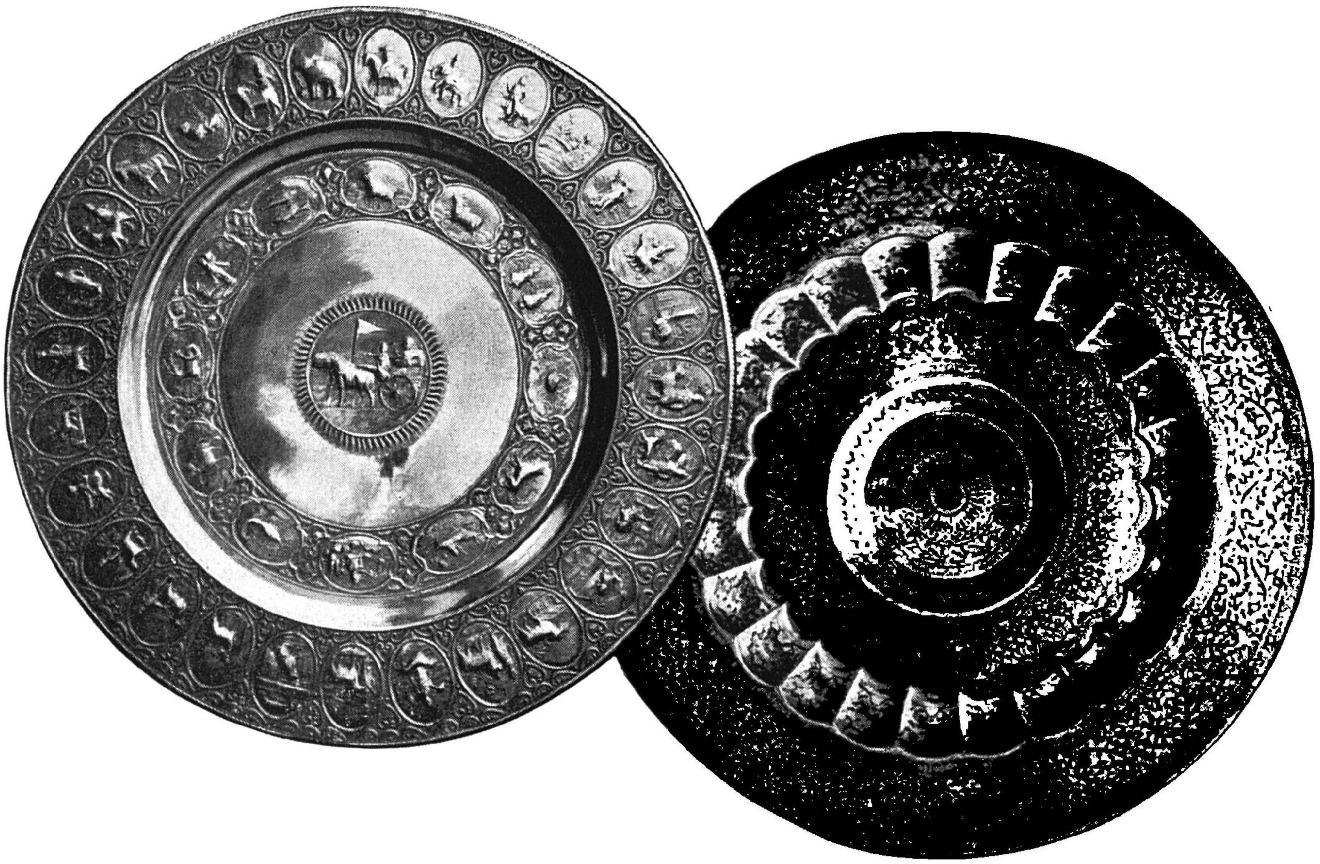
Zarnishan (embossed work), *Tarkashi* (inlay of wire) *Tehnishan* (overlay of sheet silver) are the three popular kinds of inlay workmanship, while *Zarbuland* (silver embossing) is chiefly produced in Lucknow. Floral, geometrical and architectural patterns are commonly used, while at Purnea, in Bihar, Chinese patterns are also in vogue.

Minakari work or the art of enamelling on metal flourishes at Banaras, Delhi, Lucknow, Rampur, Alwar and Kashmir while Jaipur produces the best enamelled jewellery. It is said that the Jaipur craftsmen could enamel rainbow tints on gold. *Minakari* is done on gold, silver and copper.

In India the *champleve* method is used and the metal is engraved or chased, *repoussed* or blocked out in such a way as to provide depressions in which the colours are embedded. With steel styles the pattern is engraved on the articles; the surface of the article is carefully burnished; then colours are applied in the order of their fusibility, those that stand the greatest heat being used first. After each application the article is fired. When all the colours are fixed the article is cleaned and polished. In Jaipur, Cutch, Delhi, Lucknow and Banaras, the pattern is chased and in Kashmir *repoussed*.

In Banaras the art of enamelling is mostly confined to the production

Jaipur metalware



Silver filigree work

Bidri ware of Hyderabad

of large patches of colour in imitation of jewels. The enamel is used to give the ground colour and the design is produced with diamonds or other stones set within the coloured field.

In Kashmir the surface of the article is covered with a kind of readily fusible paint. The article is then subjected to moderate heat, sufficient to melt the paint but not to make the colours fuse together.

The Lucknow style is an etched pattern on silver. The enamel used is green and blue with a small patch of yellow and brown. The etching is very minute, consisting mainly of animal forms.

Engraved brassware, with the familiar motifs of flowers, landscapes and jungle scenes, comes chiefly from Jaipur, Moradabad and Banaras. In Jaipur the engraving is done in three styles :

Chikan—a piece of bold floral decoration which stands out against the chased and lacquered surface ;

Marori—minute lacquered patterns covering the surface ;

Bidri—minute leaves and flowers covering the entire surface which is chased and lacquered.

Moradabad brassware has either plain or *sia kalam* engraving. In the plain style a floral pattern is engraved or incised on a tinned brass article until the brass shines through the tinned surface. Sometimes the inside of the pattern is ornamented with frosted decorations or perforations. In the *sia kalam* style the design is worked in relief against a chased and lacquered surface.

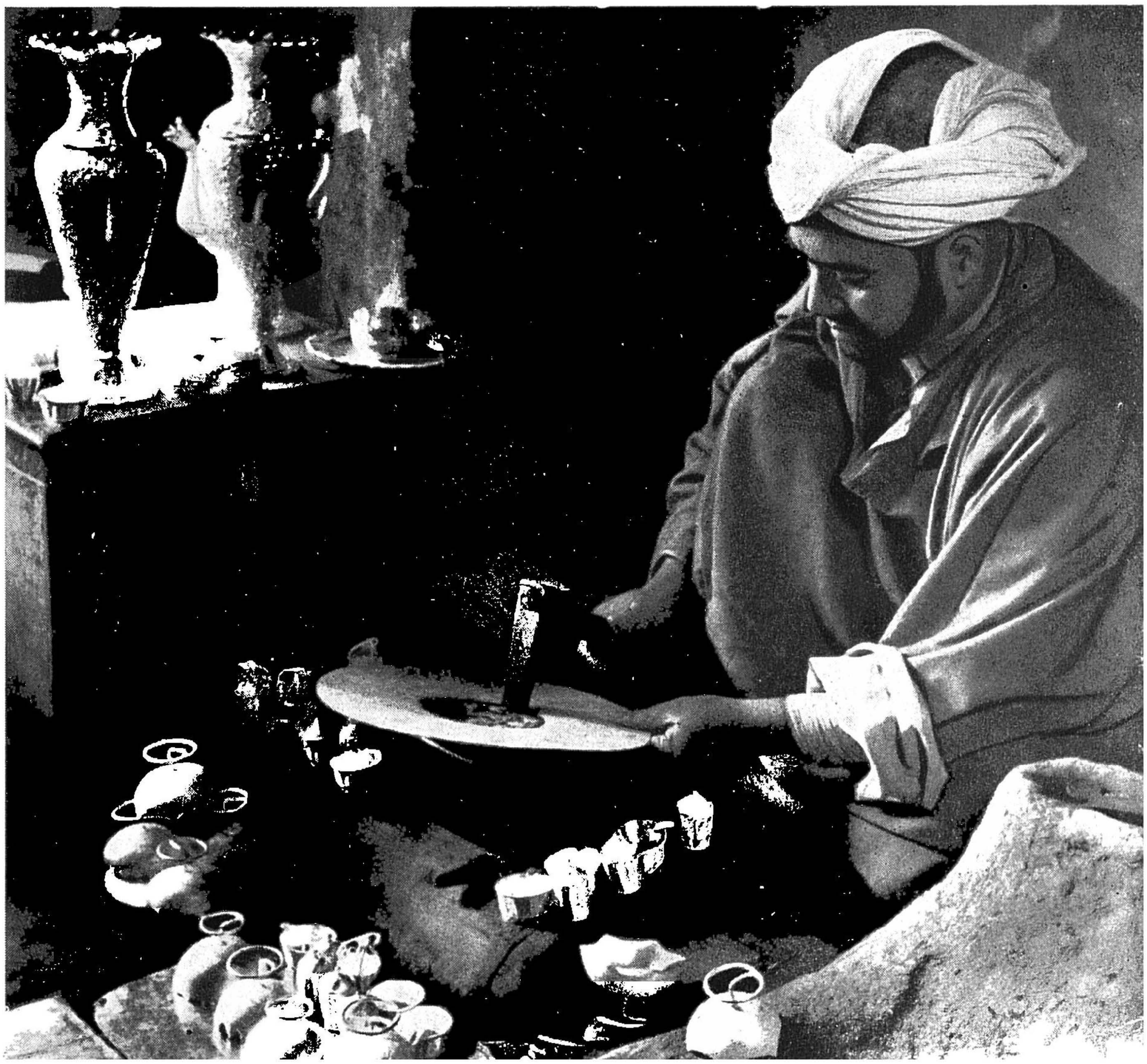
The Banaras engravings have no lacquering. The designs are chased in outline against a frosted background.

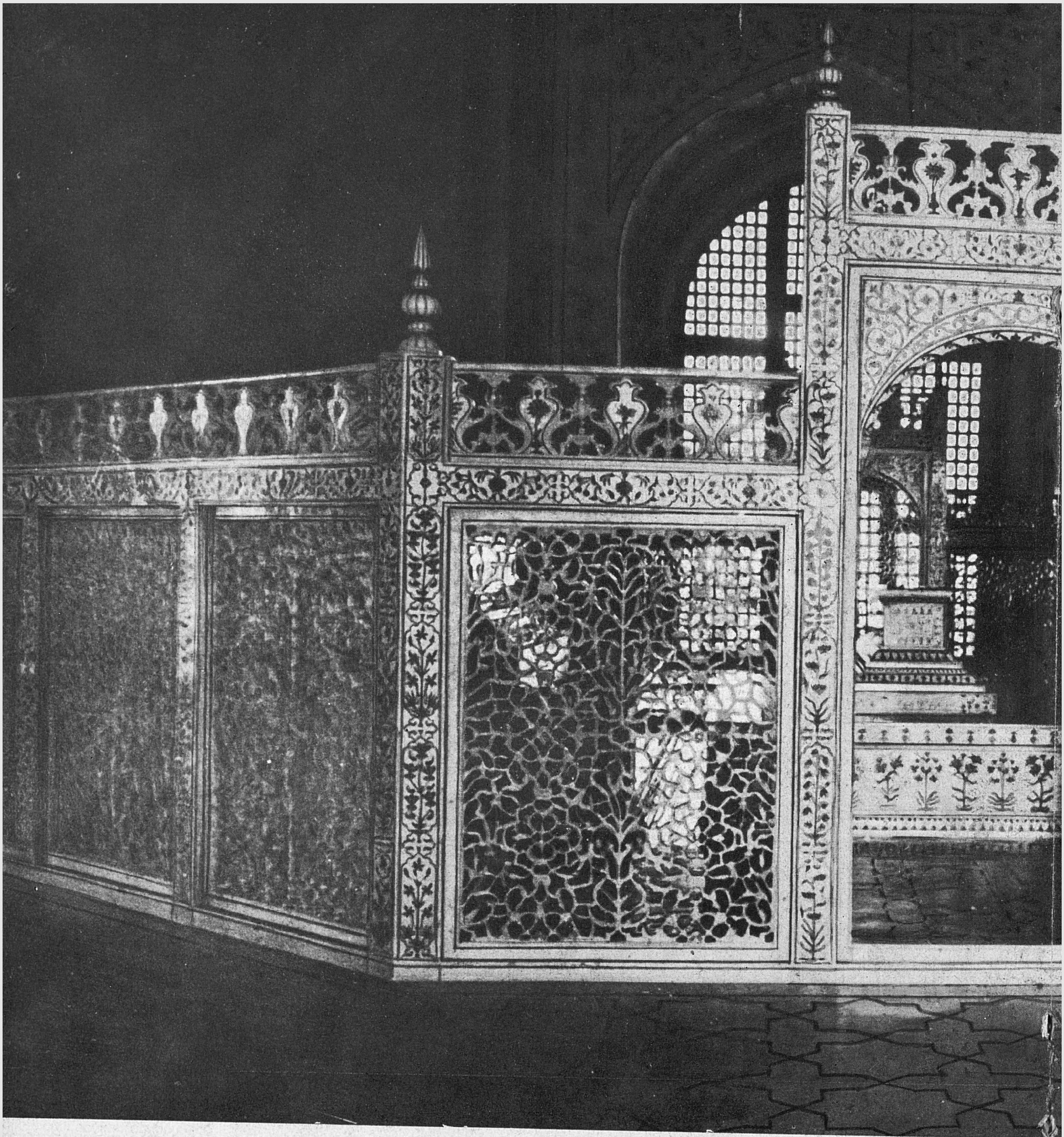
The most important style of ornamentation in gold and silver is the *Swami* style. It is composed of mythological medallions and canopied niches in imitation of the encrusted and agglutinated style of work which is characteristic of all South Indian art. This style is mostly prevalent in the Madras Presidency. In Poona a very bold form of *repousse* is used, while in Cutch a beautiful but intricate floral design in shallow *repousse* is preferred. In Baroda, however, the article is first made in richly carved wood. The silver or copper plates are held over the surface and hammered until they assume the pattern given to the wood. Calcutta produces a form of ornamentation in which rural scenery is depicted on a frosted surface. This style is now imitated in nearly every silver manufacturing centre of India.

An interesting branch of the silver and goldsmith's craft is filigree work of which Cuttack is the most important centre. Jhansi is another centre for filigrain work. At Kharakpur in Monghyr silver fish *Itr-dans* are manufactured with great skill.

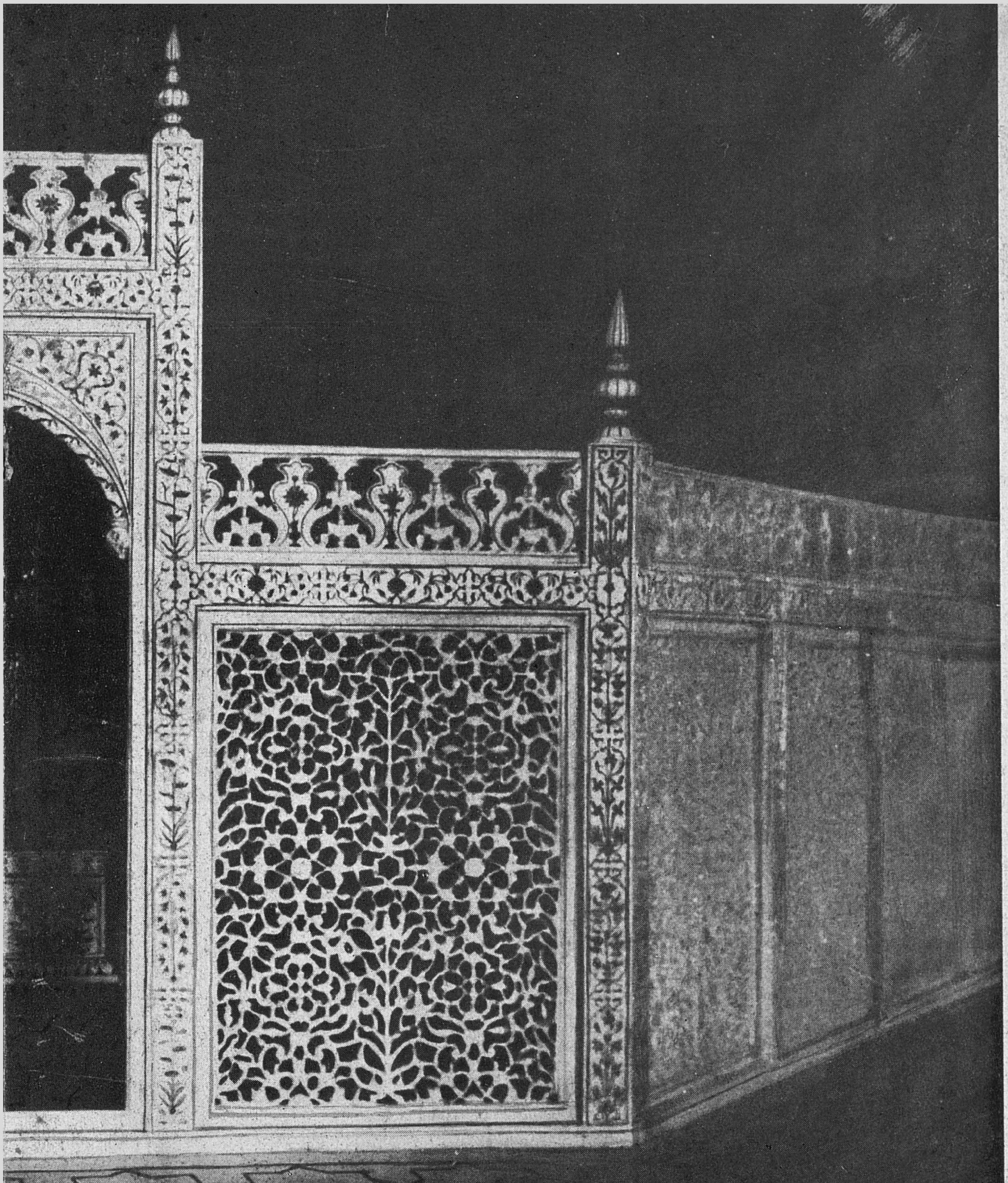
Silverware from Kashmir

Kashmir silversmith at work





Marble screen from the Taj Mahal



MESTON TRAINING COLLEGE
MADRAS

Floral design on red sandstone, Red Fort, Delhi

Stone-Carving

While glass has found great favour in Europe, in India marble, crystal and jade have been more highly prized. Indeed, marble inlay and *jali* rank among India's most important and artistic work in stone.

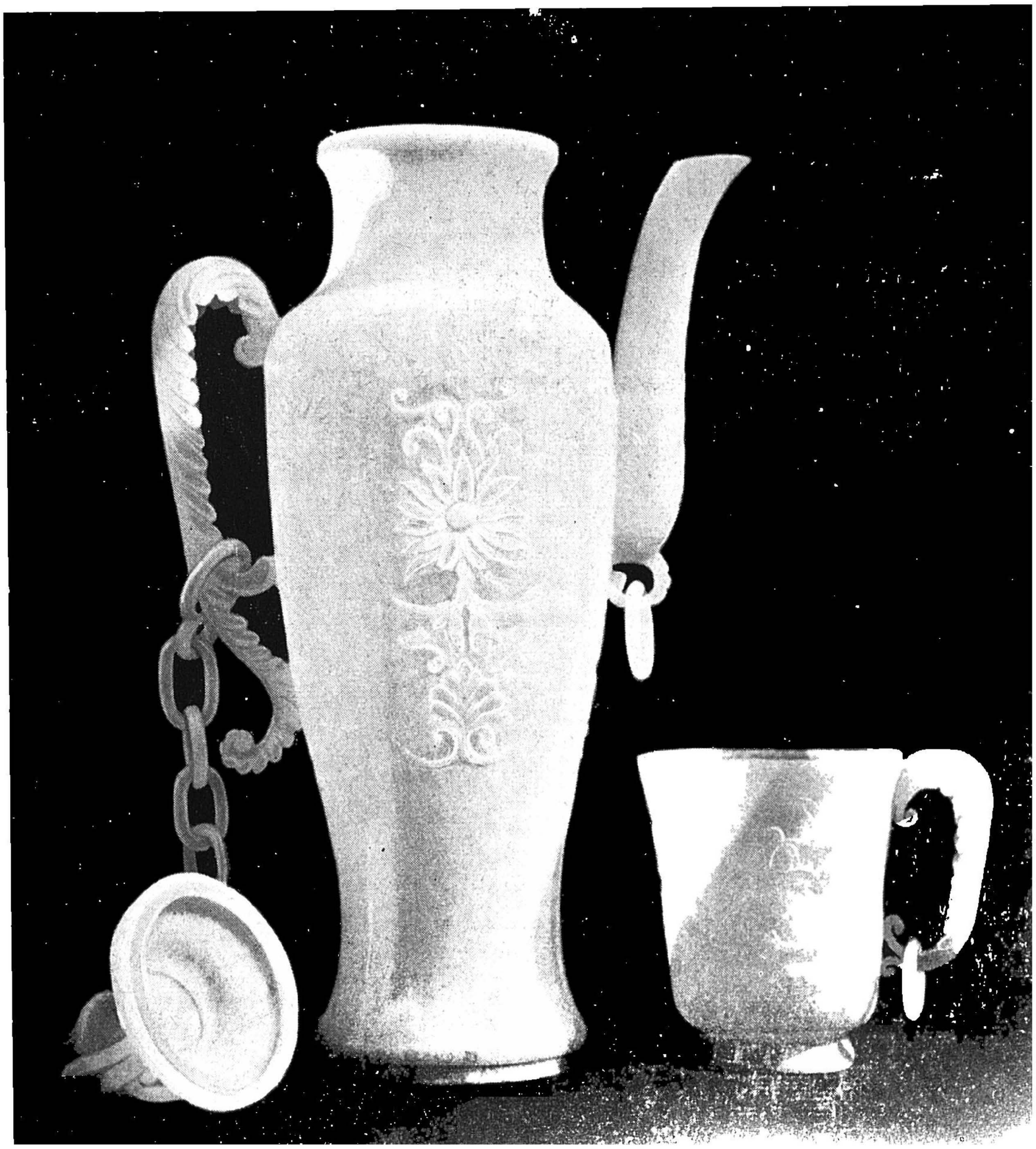
The art of inlaying coloured semi-precious stones in marble was introduced by Akbar and came to fruition under Shah Jehan. The Taj Mahal contains the greatest examples of this art. Agate, jasper, lapis lazuli, cornelian and such other stones are inlaid with masterly skill and

faultless taste to produce beautiful painted effects in marble. They must be seen to be appreciated.

Samples of intricate *jali* or fretwork in marble or sandstone are to be found in many parts of India. Not only did these craftsmen use geometrical designs which are easier to cut in stone but they used motifs of foliage and flowers and even the 'tree of life' for their *jali* patterns. In the Victoria Memorial at Calcutta one may see modern copies of old designs.

The chief centres of stone-carving in India are :

(a) Rajputana—Udaipur, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Ajmer and Jaisalmer for marble and sandstone;
(b) Central India—Bharatpur, Dholpur, and Gwalior for sandstone work;
(c) Delhi—New Delhi for modern work;
(d) U.P.—Agra, Mathura and Mirzapur;
(e) M. P.—Chanda and Bhandara for stonework;
(f) Orissa—Bhuvaneshwar and Puri;
(g) Bihar—Gaya and Monghyr;
(h) Bombay—Ahmedabad and Kathiawar;



Jade water jug and drinking cup, Hyderabad

(i) South India—Somnathpur, Belur and Halebid in Mysore; and Warangal and Golconda in Hyderabad.

Smaller stoneware comprises such articles as wall-brackets, flower vases, candlesticks, chains, lamp-posts, marble figures, pillars. Various kinds of materials, such as sandstone, marble, alabaster, soapstone, pebbles, are used. The most important centres for these wares are: (1) Agra, Mirzapur, Bharatpur for sandstone, (2) Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer for marble, (3) Agra, Bharatpur and Mysore for inlaying, and (4) Alwar and Udaipur for glass mosaic.

Crystal-carving which flourished in the Buddhist age and produced lovely receptacles, bowls, caskets, urns, etc., seems later to have fallen on evil days.

Today, rock crystals are largely cut in various towns in India and made into such articles as sword and dagger handles, beads, buckles, necklaces, etc. Jaipur turns out these fairly extensively. Turquoise is also used in the manufacture of jewellery of various sorts, Kashmir being its chief centre.

Probably the giant jade tortoise in the South Kensington Museum belongs to pre-Moghul times, but there are handsome dagger handles, amulets, gem set bowls, etc., carved in jade which have come down to us from the Moghul period. The carved columns of green jade in the royal pavilion at Amber, the old capital of Jaipur, are magnificent.

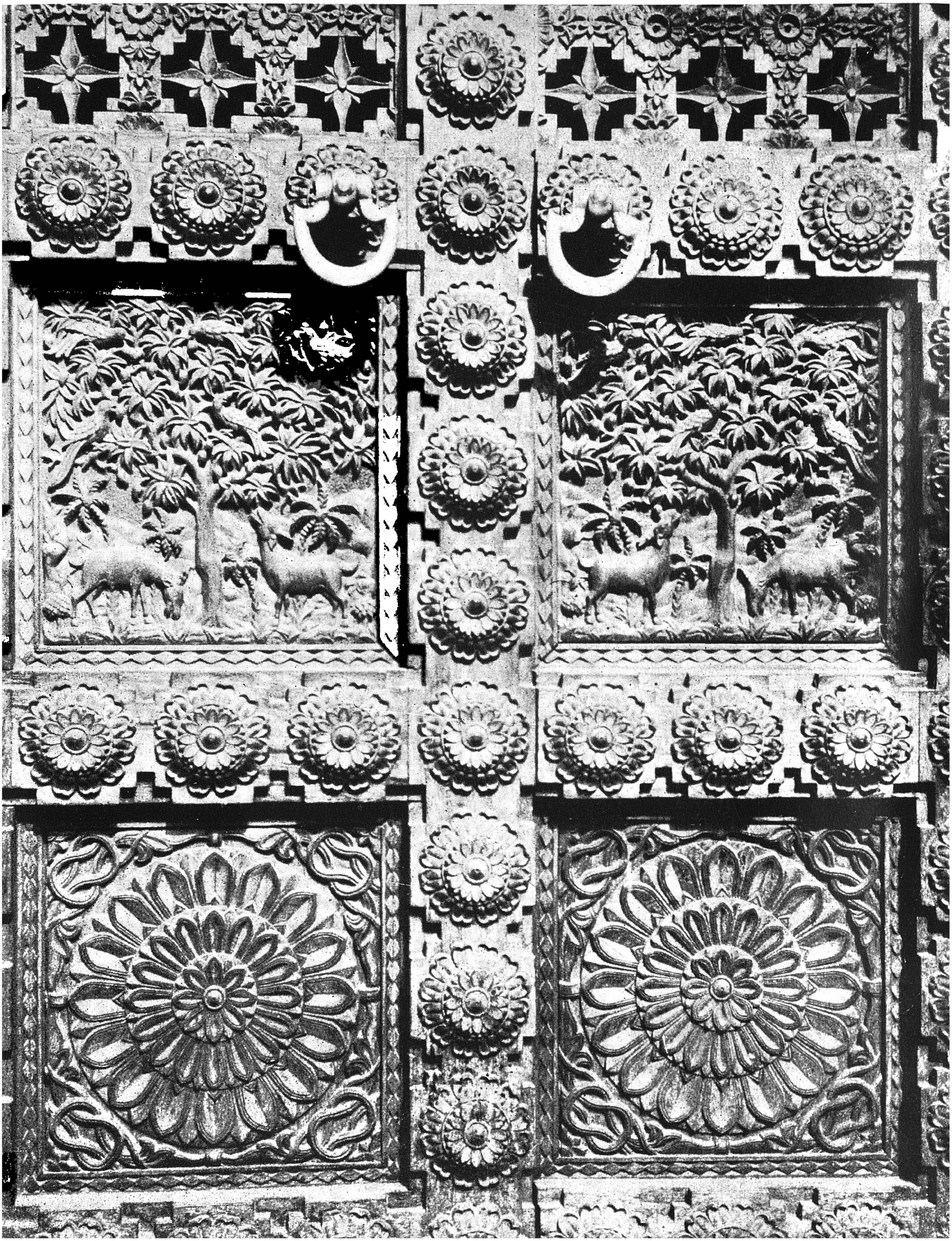
"The agate vases of Broach and Cambay have been famous under the name of Murrhine vases from the time of Pliny." (Birdwood). The articles are in the form of cups, sword handles, caskets, beads, brocades, buttons, etc. Delhi, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Cambay and Baroda are well known centres of this art.

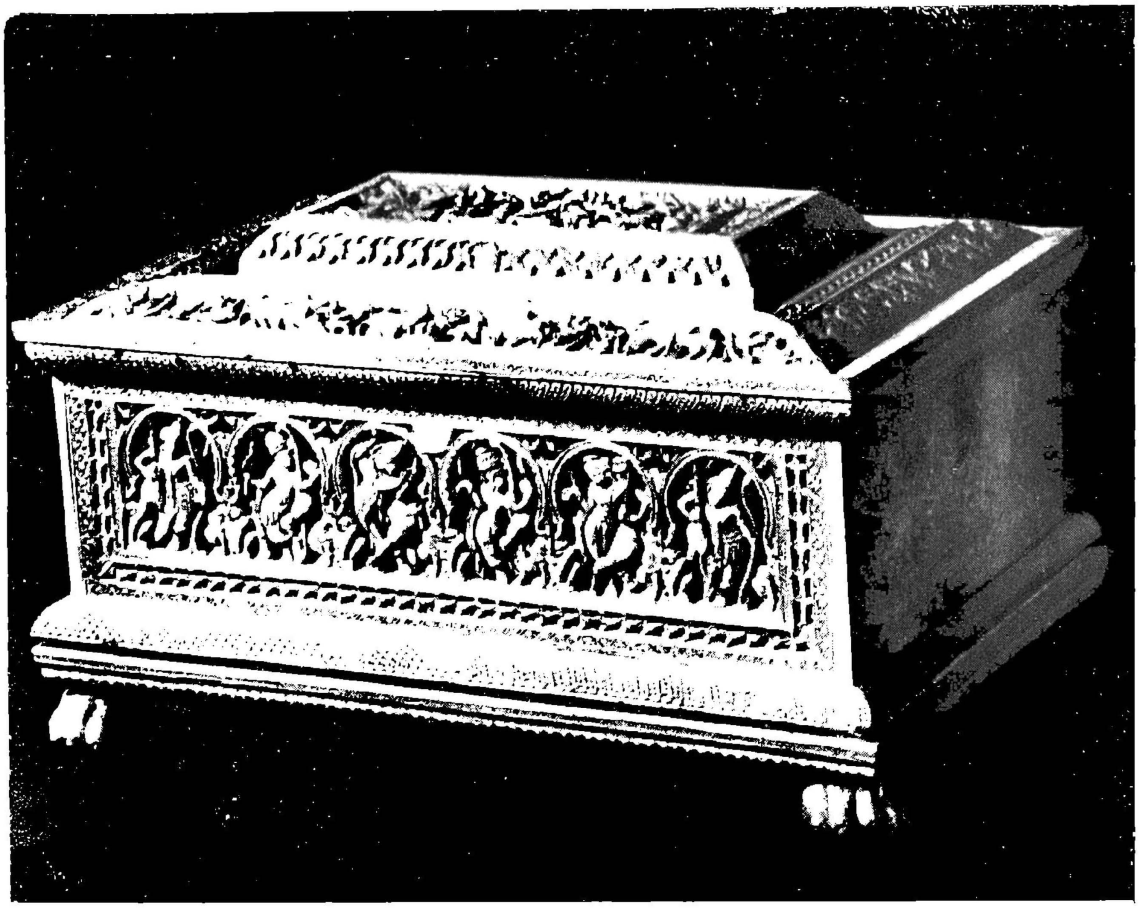
The green jade or *sang-i-yesham* is used to make such attractive articles as chess tables, *surahis,* tumblers, book ends, etc. Agate and other minor gems are also used. Other important lapidary crafts are cut garnets in the form of necklaces and other articles of personal adornment which are largely manufactured in Jaipur.

Carved wooden doorway from Ahmedabad

Wood

The tradition of wood-carving is an old one throughout the country. Ornately carved wooden doors may still be seen in remote villages. But Kashmir in the north, Mysore and Travancore in the south, Rajputana in the centre and Gujerat in the west have produced wood-carving of characteristic design, ornamentation and execution. The outstanding examples are the geometrical patterns of Kashmir which adorn not only the ceilings of houses but the roofs of river boats, sometimes painted in





Sandalwood casket from Mysore

rich glowing colours as in the Shah Hamadan; the imposing wooden *rathas* (temple chariots) of South India; the architectural carvings of old palaces in Rajputana ; and the old temples built of ornamented wood in Gujerat and Kathiawar.

The wooden *pinjra* or intricate lattice patterns of Kashmir and Gujerat were probably copied in marble and sandstone at a later date.

Today, Amritsar and Bhera in the Punjab are centres of carving in *shisham* and produce ornamented chairs, tables, bedsteads and screens. The carvers of Amritsar enjoy the highest reputation as skilled wood-workers. Chiniot is best known for its brass-inlaying on *shisham* wood, and Udaki for a remarkably flat style of work in arabesque design. Nagina is the centre of a graceful style of ebony carving. Tables, chairs, caskets, picture frames, walking sticks and such other articles are turned out richly chased and ornamented.

Ahmedabad art is very intricate and elaborate, the development in panelling being its chief characteristic. The finest example of this art may be seen in Rani Sipri's tomb and mosque and in Sidi Said's mosque. The art of wood-carving in Mysore and Coorg is a mixed form of indigenous and Chalukyan art. It is a decorative art mostly using celestial forms. Madura was long famous for a simple and elegant style of incised black wood tables. The design was made by means of a pair of compasses, while the legs were in the form of elephant heads with extended trunks. But now Burmese and other styles are followed and the Yali figures of the great temple are copied for the legs of the tables. Malabar turns out charmingly engraved coconuts.

But for artistic quality the walnut wood-work of Kashmir is unrivalled. The folding screens, the tables, cabinets, picture frames, etc., of delicately

carved walnut wood, which has a lovely grain and colour, are in a class by themselves.

A variety of beautiful and artistic articles, such as mythological sculptures, temples, album boards, folding screens, picture frames, glove boxes, book covers, etc., are made from sandalwood. The most important centre of this craft is the Shimoga district in Mysore, although commendable articles are also produced at Travancore, Trichinopoly, Madura, Kanara, Ahmedabad and Surat.

The sandalwood-carving is always minute and elaborate, but there are three well marked types. In the Surat and Ahmedabad work the foliage is large and deeply cut, interspersed with figures of mythological interest. Mythological subjects abound in Kanara sandalwood work, but all are artistically assembled. In Mysore carving the foliage is thrown out in fan-like sprays with the tips rolled up. The mythological figures are placed within canopied panels and the elephant or the swan is a common feature.

There is no special craft devoted to inlaying, but there are a few centres that have for long years been famous for expert inlayers—Jullundur for ivory, bone and brass-inlaying on *shisham*, Mainpuri for copper or brass wire ; Mysore for ivory on *shisham*, rosewood or ebony, and Monghyr for ivory on ebony. The Mysore work is distinctly superior in artistic design and workmanship.

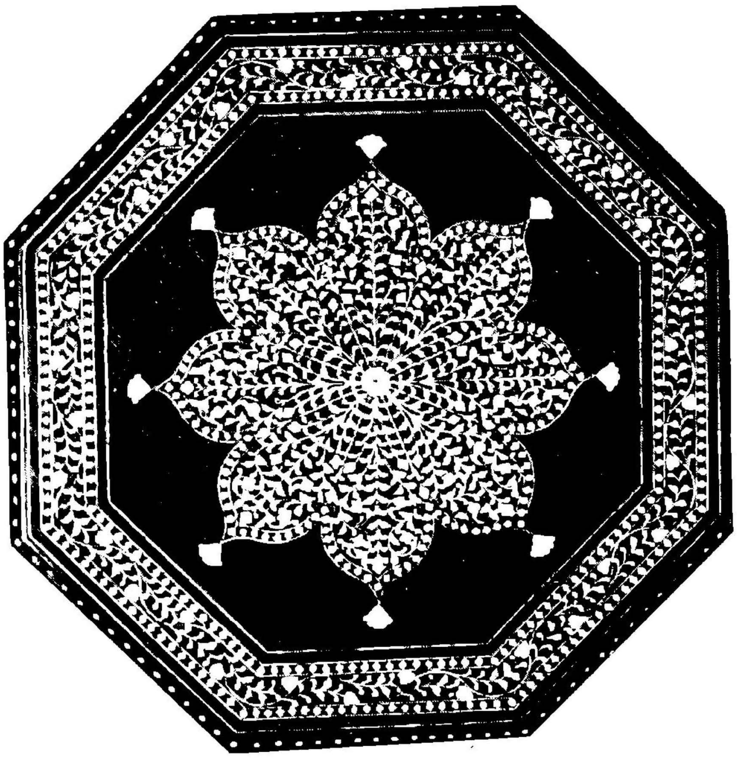


Table top inlaid with ivory

A walnut wood screen

Ivory work from Delhi

Ivory

An inscription at Sanchi (200 B.C.) records the guild of ivory carvers of Vidisa, modern Besnagar in Gwalior, dedicating a bas-relief which they had carved. Paes, a Portuguese traveller, has described a chamber in the Vijaynagar palace as being "all of ivory, as well the chamber as the walls from top to bottom, and the pillars of the cross—timbers had roses and flowers of lotuses all of ivory and all well executed, so that there could not be better."

For sheer elegance and fine craftsmanship the ivories of Mysore and Travancore are highly prized. Murshidabad and Cuttuck still keep up to their old tradition of producing fine ivories. One of the striking ivory panels produced in South India has found a place in the National Museum of Florence.

Carved images of mythological interest, nudes, scenes from contemporary life and articles like combs, caskets, cigarette boxes, necklaces, bangles, chessmen, toys, paper cutters and the like are produced in ivory. In East Punjab, Amritsar, Patiala, Ambala and Ludhiana produce delicate but durable ivory articles. In Bengal, Calcutta and Murshidabad are known for minute ornamentation. The ivories of Delhi have a popular tourist appeal.

The best work of inlaid ivory may be seen in the Golden Temple of Amritsar. Inlaid work on sandalwood, tortoise shell and horn is produced at many centres in North and South India.

Mats from strips of ivory are woven in Delhi, Bharatpur, Murshidabad and Tipperah.

Krishna and Gopini, ivory statuettes from Mysore

(RIGHT): *Ivory elephant from Delhi*

An ivory miniature

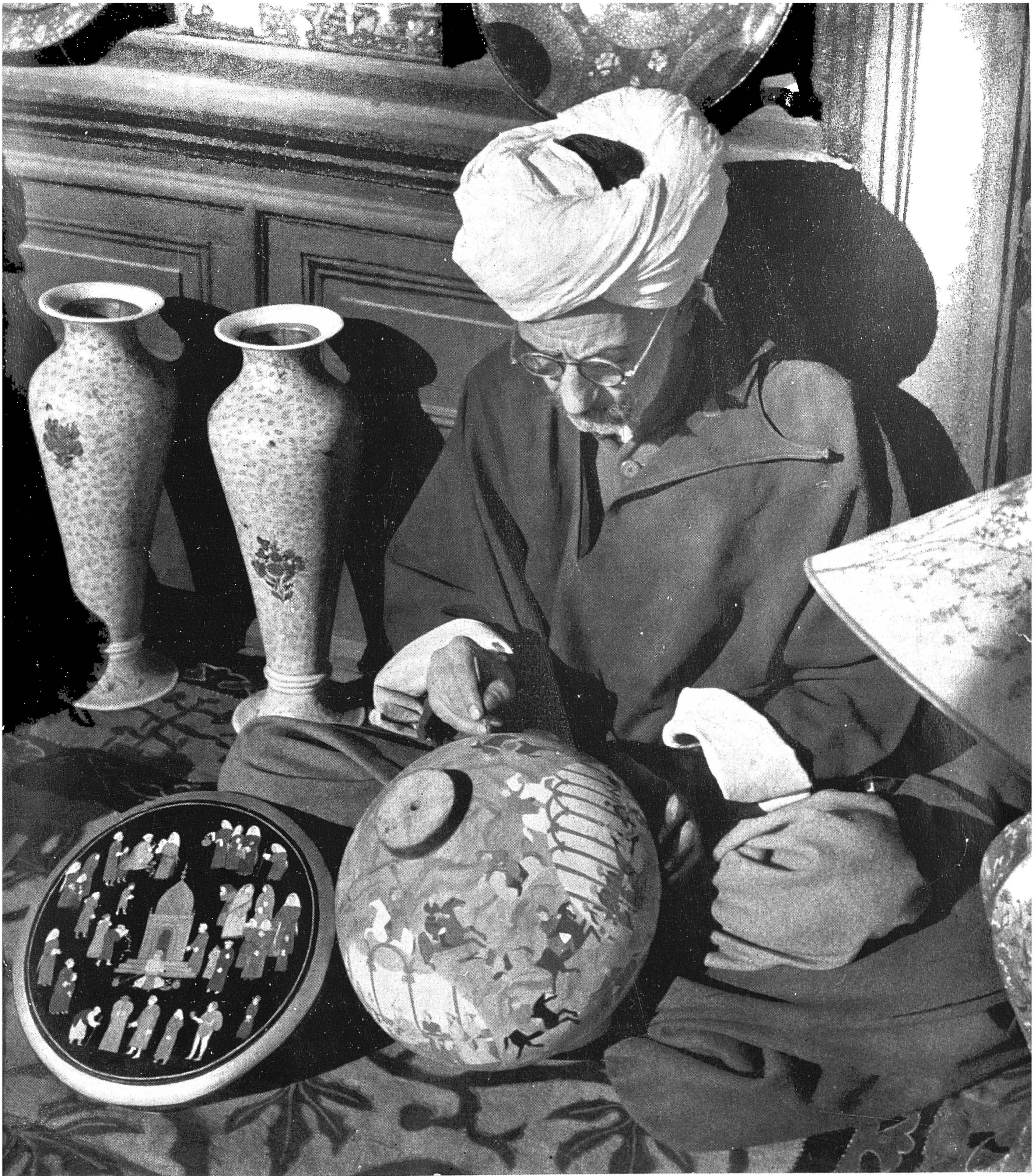
Decorative papier mache *work from Kashmir*

Papier Mache

The *papier mache* products reveal the artistic ingenuity of the Kashmiri craftsman. Bowls, powder boxes, trays, vases, lamp shades, etc., of gorgeously painted *papier mache* attract every eye.

The genuine articles are made of pounded waste paper mixed with starch. Several layers of paper are pasted on the mould before the pulp is laid on it. Again layers of paper are pasted and this process is repeated until the article is of the proper shape and thickness. While still damp, it is wrapped in a piece of muslin and covered with a layer of plaster of Paris. It is rubbed gently until the surface becomes smooth and then the ground colour is painted. On this background the pattern is painted in water colours. When the article is dry it is glazed with a transparent varnish.

To avoid this tedious process and produce more articles in less time wood-pulp has come to be used instead of paper. These articles, except for their specific gravity and tone when tapped, can be passed off to the novice as genuine *papier mache*.



Kashmiri papier mache *craftsman*

Jewellery

Codrington has observed, "The fact that jewellery is a traditional form of wealth and that a man will hang his earnings round his wife's neck and arms and ankles is not merely to be regarded as an unsocial antiquated form of hoarding. It is delightful and until the new world with its co-operative societies and schools can give equivalent value in delight, it will certainly go on."

Jewellery of gold or silver, exquisitely patterned and studded with diamonds and rubies, besides being a source of delight to the wearer and the beholder, is also supposed to ward off the 'evil eye.' The ornaments for the forehead, ears, nose and neck are especially worn for this purpose.

Another point to remember is that the interest in jewellery has kept the standards of this ancient craft as high as ever in this country. The Indian jeweller is willing to take infinite pains over the pattern of a tiny nose-ring. "This character of Indian jewellery," says Sir George Birdwood, "is in remarkable contrast to modern European jewellery, in which the object of the jewellery seems to be to bestow the least amount of work on the greatest amount of metal." This remark may not be altogether fair, but it shows the impression Indian jewellery had made on an European by its delicate artistry.

The wedding-ring has a large variety of counterparts in India which differ from province to province. In the United Provinces and Bihar the *anant* and *bichhya* are worn on the big and second toes. In Rajputana a small round ornament, the *ver,* is worn at the front of the parting and is held in place by braids of hair woven into it. In Bengal an iron bangle, plain or coated with silver or gold, is worn. In Madras the *thali* is in vogue. This consists of two pieces of gold, convex on the outer and flat at the inner side, with hexagonal gold beads in between, worn on a gold chain. In Coorg the bride wears a necklace of small black and gold beads interlinked. These ornaments cannot be worn either by a spinster or a widow.

The traditional forms of jewellery in India are :

HEAD ORNAMENTS

Sisphul, chanak or choti-phul—A round boss worn on the hair over the forehead; it is cut or indented so as to resemble a chrysanthemum.

Phul—A boss like the above, only smooth, hemispherical and set with a stone ; worn at the top of the head.

Mauli—A long chain made of rows of pearls separated by jewelled studs, about 8 inches long, hanging from the head on one side.

Sur Mang—A chain and pendant worn on the head.

Boda—An ornament of silk and silver plaited into the hair of children.

Ornament for coiffure

ORNAMENTS FOR THE FOREHEAD

Damni or Dauni—A fringe hanging over the forehead on either side of the face—sometimes richly jewelled.

Kutbi—Variety of above.

Tika or Kashka—Small ornament worn on the forehead.

Chand Bina—A moon shaped pendant.

Tawit—Small amulets worn on the head.

Jhumar—A tassel shaped ornament worn at one side of the forehead.

Guchohi Marwarid—A cluster of pearls.

Bindli—Small tinsel ornament.

Barwata—Small stars worn over the eyebrows.

EAR ORNAMENTS

Bali or Goshwara—A set of rings worn all round the edge of the ear.

Bali Bahaduri—It has a large pointed stud in the centre.

Kan—A gold ornament shaped like the ear itself to which rings are attached. It is worn covering the ear.

Karnphul and Jhumka—Bell-shaped ornament with a fringe of pearls or metal suspended to the ear by a flower shaped stud.

Bala Khungridar—A heavy fringed ear-ring.

Machh Machhlian—A small gold or jewelled figure of a fish worn as an ear-ring.

Tid or Patang—A locust-shaped jewel pendant; along the crescented lower edge hang a row of gold pipal leaves.

Tandaura, Dedi—A large star-shaped jewelled stud.

Mor Phunwar—A pendant of jewels being a crude imitation of a peacock.

NOSE

Nose ornaments were probably not worn in ancient times because they are not mentioned anywhere. It is not known when this custom came into vogue. It is now dying out under western influence.

Nath—A large nose-ring, one side of the ring being ornamented with a belt of jewels or a few pearls and gold spangled ornaments hung on to it.

Bulak—A small pendant either worn hung to the cartilege of the nose or else strung on to a *nath*.

Latkan—An ornament of pendants hanging from the *nath*.

Laung—A small stud, generally of gold set with a pearl or turquoise.

The *nath* is held up by a chain which is attached to the hair by a hook. This helps to take off the strain from the nose.

TEETH

Rekhan—Studs of gold or silver fixed into the front teeth.

NECK

Chandan-Har—A necklace of a great number of chains.

Mala or *Har*—A long plain necklace of gold beads or pearls.

Champakali—A necklace with pendants representing the buds of the champa flower. The pendants are either plain or set with stones.

Jugnu—A simple jewelled pendant hanging from a chain or thread.

Mohran—A gold mohur or coin hanging from a silk thread.

Haul-dil—A sort of amulet of jade not square but cut in curves round the edge.

Hansli—A collar of silver or gold, thick in the middle and tapering at the ends, sometimes heavily encrusted with stones.

Galaband—A jewelled or plain gold collar.

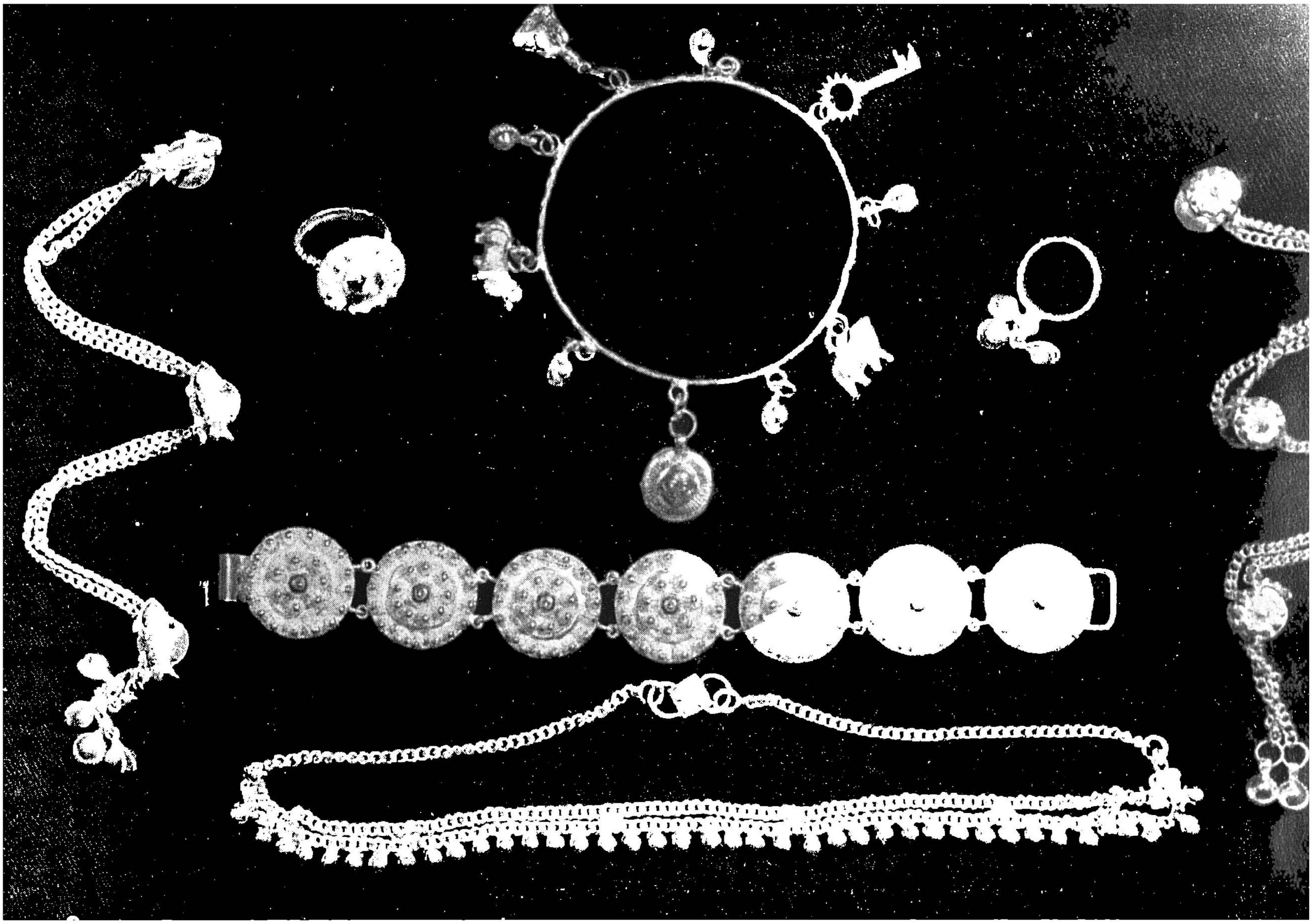
Mohan Mala—A long necklace made of large gold beads, held together by a twisted gold thread.

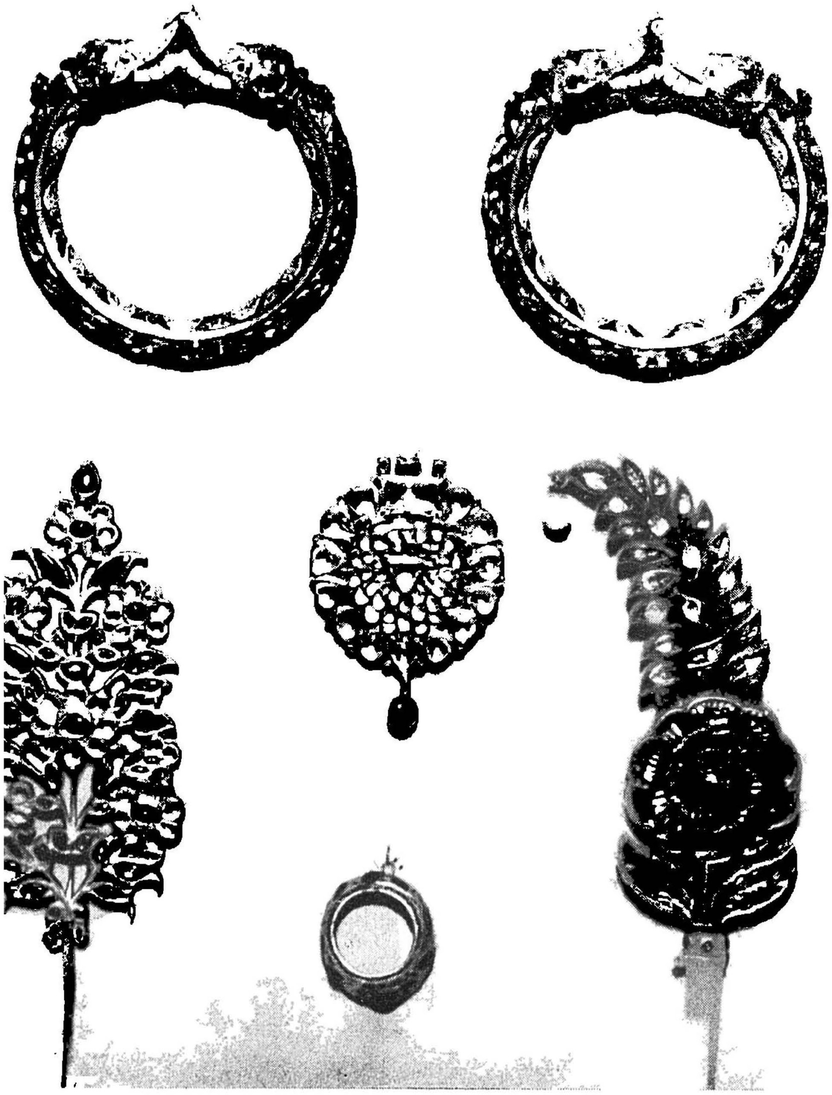
Itrdan—A square jewelled or plain gold pendant, attached to a silk chain with a cavity for perfume.

Kandi—A chain of silk for amulet cases.

Silwatta—An amulet case shaped like a small gold pillow or bolster, with two rings attached for suspension.

Indian jewellery—ornaments for the neck, the arm and the leg





Mogul jewellery from the South Kensington Museum

Panch-lari—Necklace of five strings of small gold beads or pearls.
Sat-Lari—Necklace of seven strings.

ARMS

Bazuband—A broad belt-like ornament tied to the upper arm.

Jaushan—An armlet made of a number of drum-shaped beads strung together.

Tawiz—An armlet worn on the upper arm.

Anant—A large thin but solid gold or silver ring used chiefly by Hindus.

Nav Ratan—Nine gems with silk threads attached.

Bhawatta—A square gold ornament worn on the upper arm.

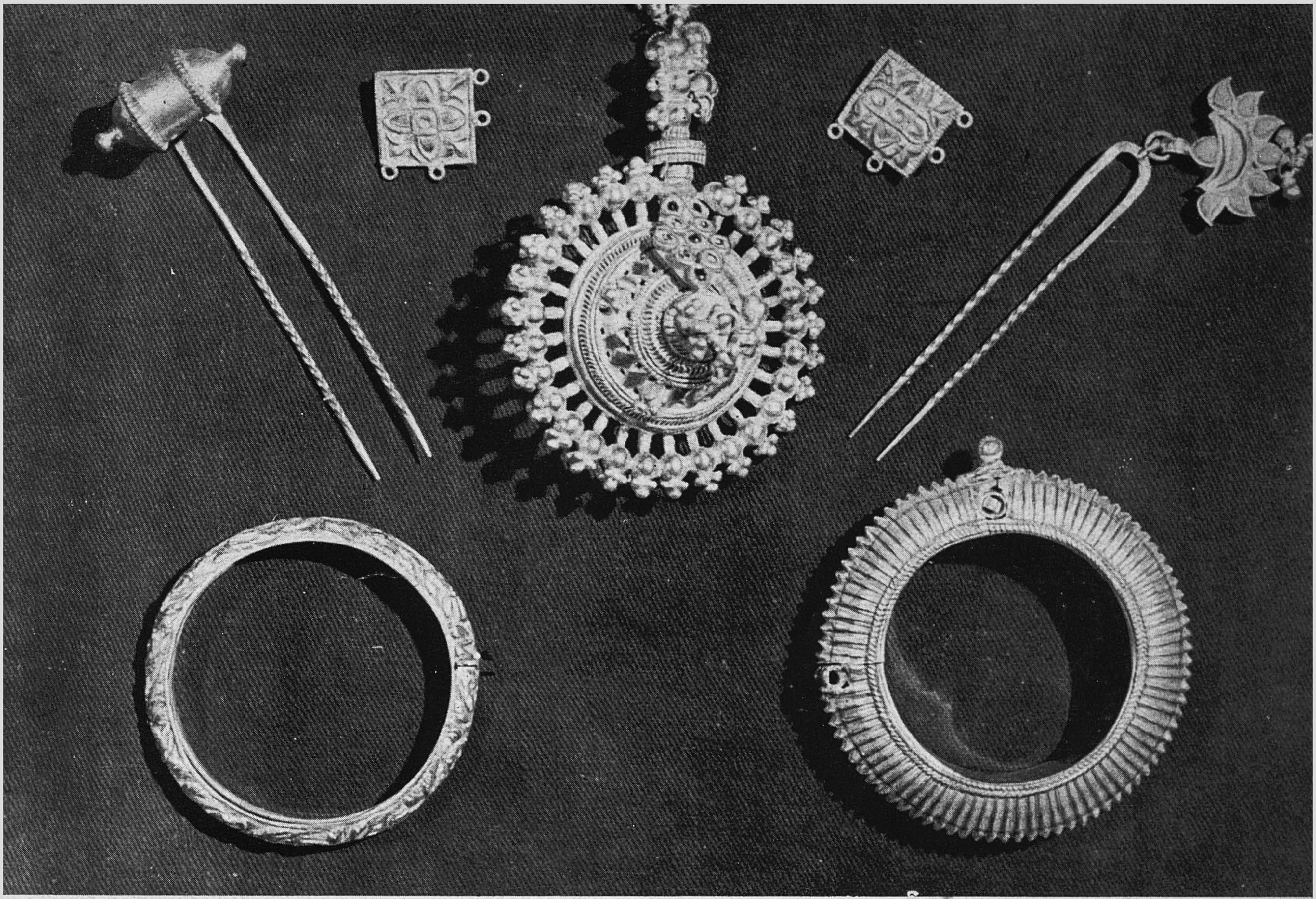
WRISTS

Ponchian Kutbi—A bracelet made of gold or silver beads shaped like *ilaichi dana* or grains of cardamoms.

Kangan—A metal bracelet.

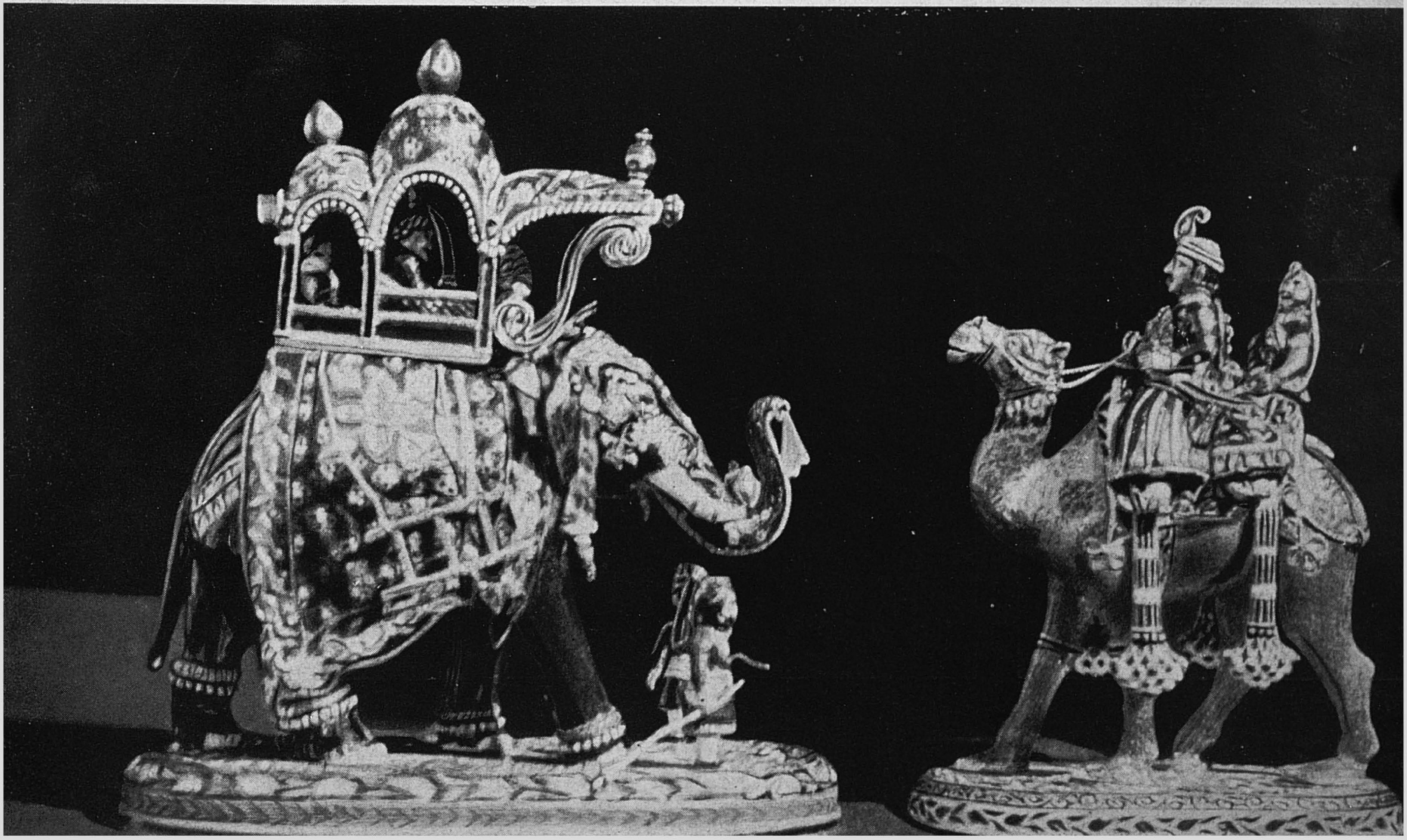
Banka—Thick gold bracelets especially worn by Hindus.

Gokhru—Bracelet with serrated edges.



Silver jewellery from Bomba

Enamelled elephant and camel in gold from Hyderabad



Kara—A round bracelet of gold or enamel. It may also be jewelled. Heads of tigers, alligators and other animals are often engraved at either end.

Ratan Chur—A highly wrought gold plate which is placed on the back of the hand attached by gold rings to the five fingers.

Gajra—A flexible bracelet made of square gold studs, mounted on a silk band.

RINGS

Angushtri—A ring set with stones, also called *mundri* or *anguthi*.

Chhalla—A plain hoop, with or without stones of gold or silver, worn also on the toes.

Arsi—Worn on the thumb. A big ring set with a mirror. It opens to reveal a small cavity which contains *sindur*.

WAIST

The waist is girdled by a belt known as the *Kardhani*. It may be gold or silver and is made up of a number of chains held together by bands.

ANKLERS

Pahzeb—Various ankle ornaments made with chains and small belts, which clink together when the wearer walks.

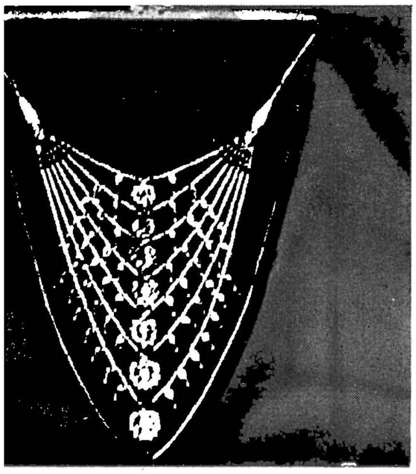
Chanja—A large hollow ring.

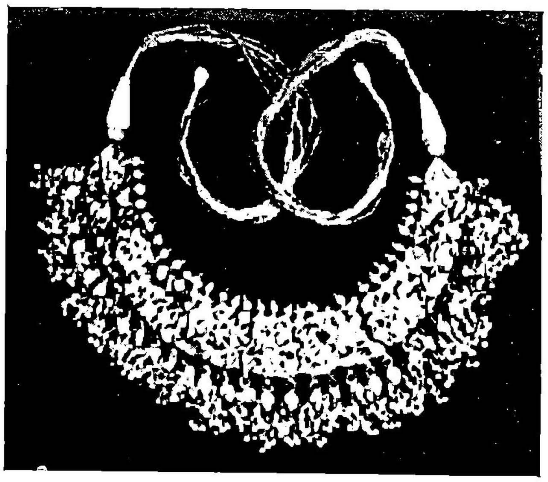
Ghungru—A ring of long ornamental beads of silver.

Zanjiri—A set of chains with a broad clasp known as *Tora*.

Sir Thomas Wardle says, "I bought for a few annas a bronze chain anklet, but all cast in one mould together, quite a common thing, but so wonderfully made that one of our best foundry owners told me he did not think anyone could do it in Europe."

Gold necklaces set with precious stones





Clay toys from Lucknow

Toys

The symbolic designs, such as the *rangoli* of Western India and the *alpona* of Bengal, drawn in front of the threshold owe their inspiration to folk art. Even more so does the making of Indian toys. Made of painted clay or wood, metal or cloth, they are of the essence of folk art. Horses, cows and goats, carts and chariots, the goddess of child-birth or some local patron goddess, are made not for the aesthete's enjoyment but for the amusement of village children.

While it is generally true that every village potter turns out toys for local fairs, throughout India there are districts which produce large and better varieties of toys. Pilgrim centres offer the best market for toys.

Excellent painted toys of baked clay representing human beings and animals, individually or in groups, are made in many districts of Madras and the United Provinces.

Wooden toys are popular in all parts of India. They are made of light wood which is easily available. Horses on wheels, figures of men and women representing various occupations and scenes from actual life are chiselled in wood and lacquered or painted.

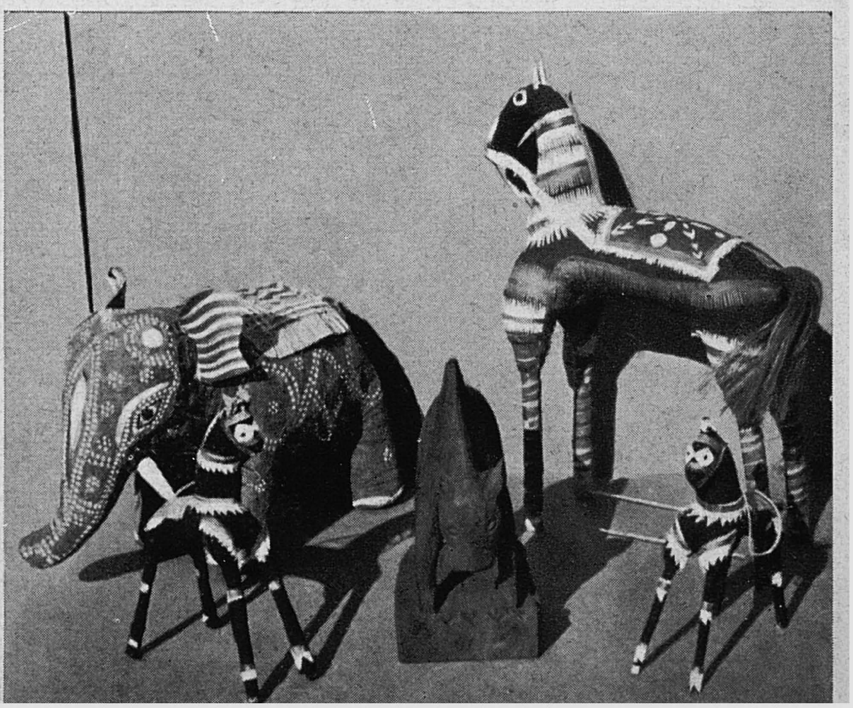
Metal toys are chiefly made of polished brass. They are generally heavy models of temple chariots or bullock carts and scenes from mythological stories of urban and rural life. They are more suitable for mantlepiece decoration and use as paper-weights than children's toys. Toy replicas of the kitchen with pots and pans are favourite playthings of Indian girls.

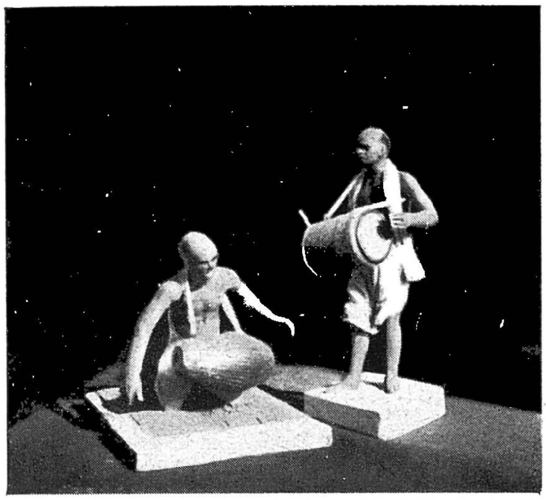
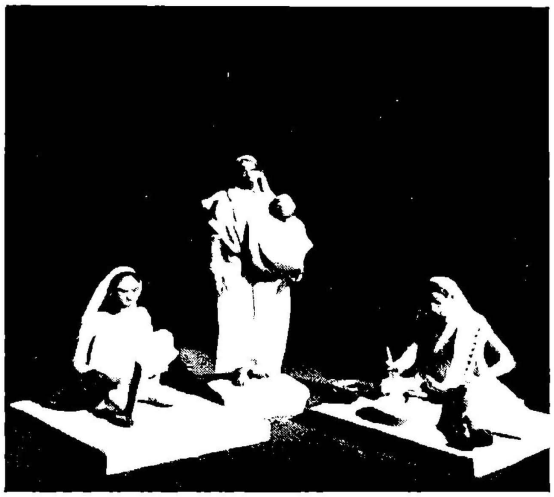
The war has had its effect on toy-making and aeroplanes, tanks, guns and steamers are now popular toys in India.

Richly dressed cloth dolls, marionettes worked by strings are made at many centres by women. Their bright trappings and durability make cloth toys popular everywhere.

Village toys from Bengal

Toys from Andhra



Clay toys from Krishnanagar, Bengal

The Future

Industrialism threatens the existence of many handicrafts through mass production. Hand-made articles are more expensive than the factory-made ones. When people cannot pay the high price for hand-made articles they are driven by necessity to buy cheaper goods. For a time craftsmen may use inferior materials and disregard quality. But if sales are not adequate, their handicraft is doomed.

The gorgeous *mashru* brocades of Aurangabad were once well known. They were used by Muslims for wedding coats. But the demand for this *mashru* has steadily gone down. Now the weavers are using artificial silk in order to cope with a falling market. The craftsmanship of the *mashru* weavers has not deteriorated, but the end of this handicraft is in sight. Today people will not pay so much for something that can be used only on rare occasions.

It may, however, be difficult to revive handicrafts like *mashru* brocade which have been killed by changing fashions. But there are numerous other arts and crafts which once flourished in India and have been dwindling for over a century not because of changed fashions but through the competition of the machine.

In ancient India there were craft-guilds (*sreni*) which were efficiently organized. "These guilds safeguarded the professional interests of their

members, regulated working hours and wages, enforced their decisions by fines and generally controlled and supervised the activities of the professional classes and artisans in the interests of the whole community . . . These guilds were governed by their own laws and the king was expected to recognize and respect these laws."*

It should not be difficult to organize craftsman's guilds now that village councils (*panchayats*) are being established by the provincial governments. These guilds would be very useful in the revival and protection of Indian handicrafts.

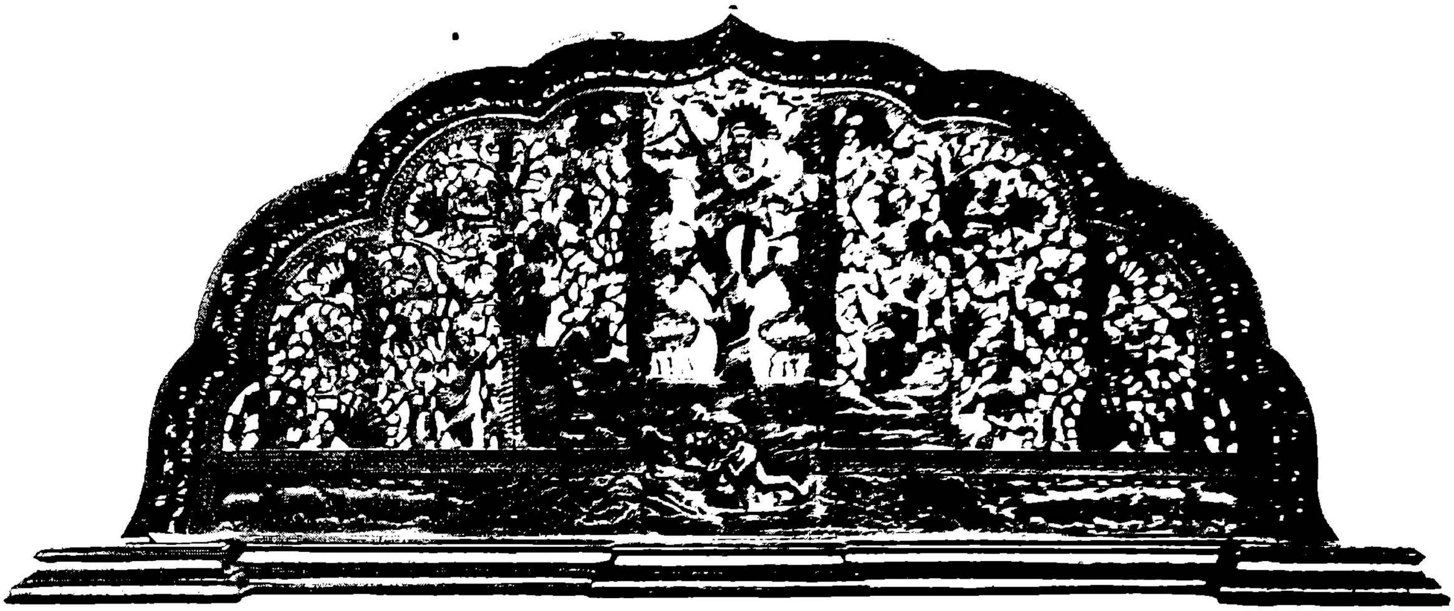
On the basis of these guilds a national network of semi-official handicraft societies could be organized for each unit of India. From time to time these societies could send their recommendations to the government of the unit and to the Central Cottage Industries Board. These societies could also organize annual provincial arts and crafts exhibitions to stimulate interest among buyers and publicize the wares of the craftsmen.

In March 1949, an All-India Exhibition of Handicrafts was held in Delhi. Along with this Exhibition the Central Cottage Industries Emporium was also opened by H.E. the Governor General. In three months the Emporium had sold articles worth Rs. 10,000.

Several States have such handicraft shops, the largest number of them being in the Uttar Pradesh. They are at Lucknow, Allahabad, Gorakhpur, Almora, Naini Tal, Meerut, Agra and Dehra Dun. It is hoped that in the near future every State will have an adequate number of handicraft shops.

The Government of India is conscious of the need to revive handicrafts and cottage industries. It has constituted a Central Cottage Industries Board under the Ministry of Industry and Supply. This Board consists of representatives of the States and some organizations of cottage industries and is intended to develop handicrafts and cottage industries. The Government of India has started a training institute which will train about 250 trainees at a time in handicrafts and cottage industries.

* Garratt—*Legacy of India*, pp. 154-155



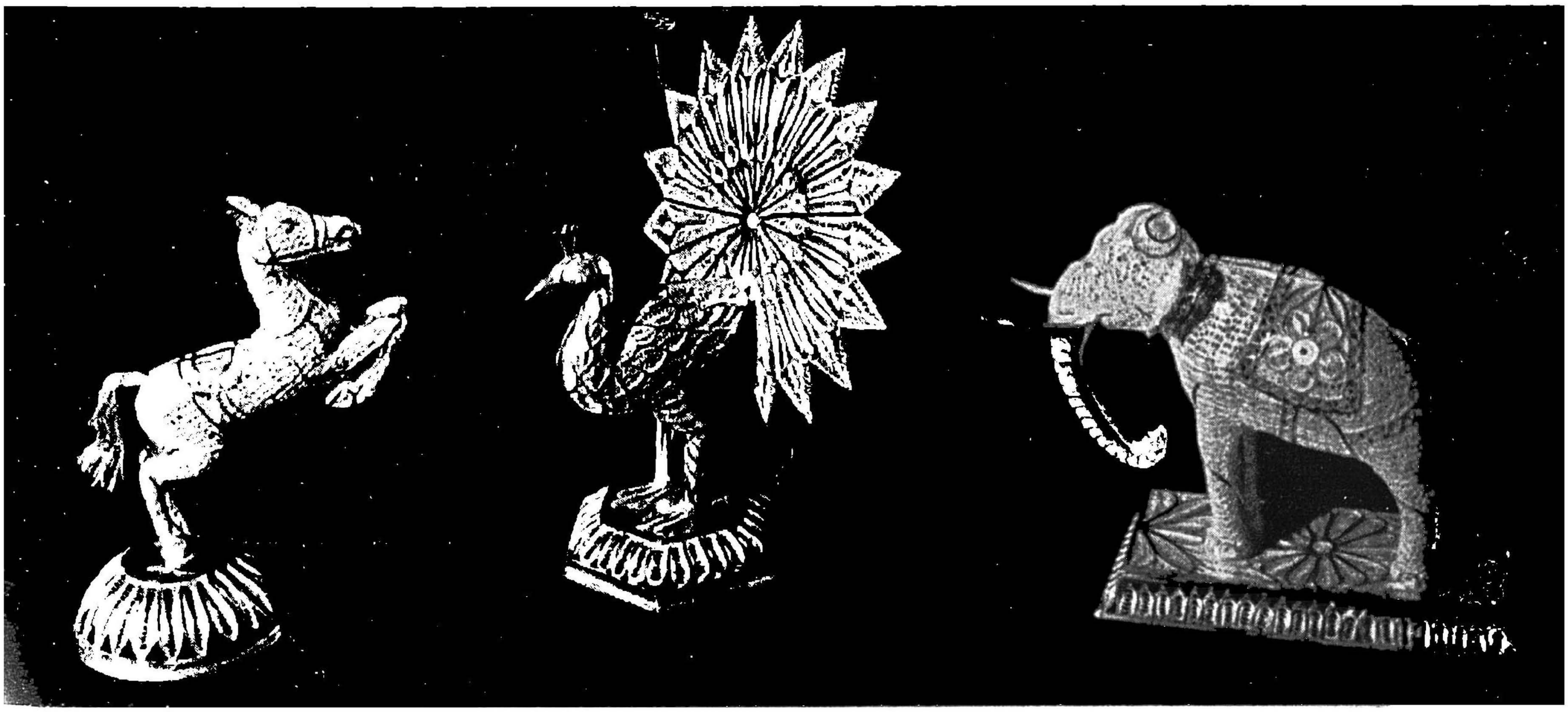
Sandalwood panel from the Mysore Palace

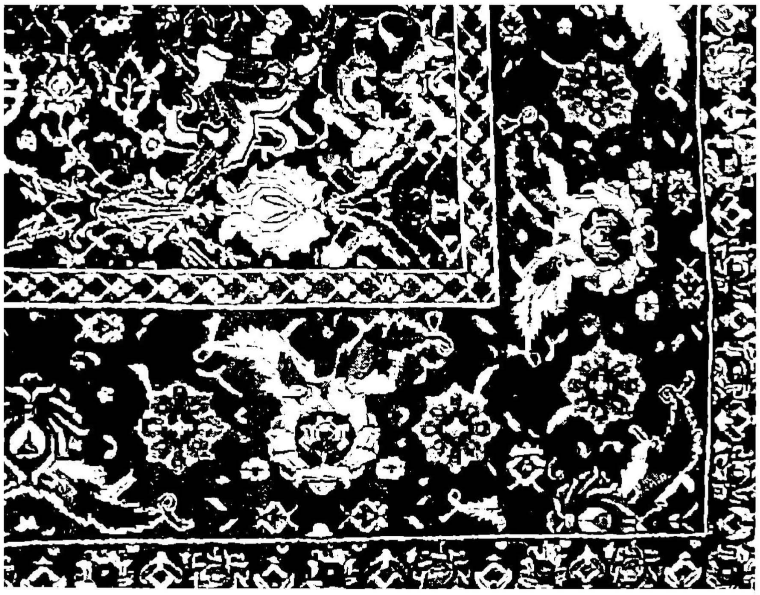
Appendix

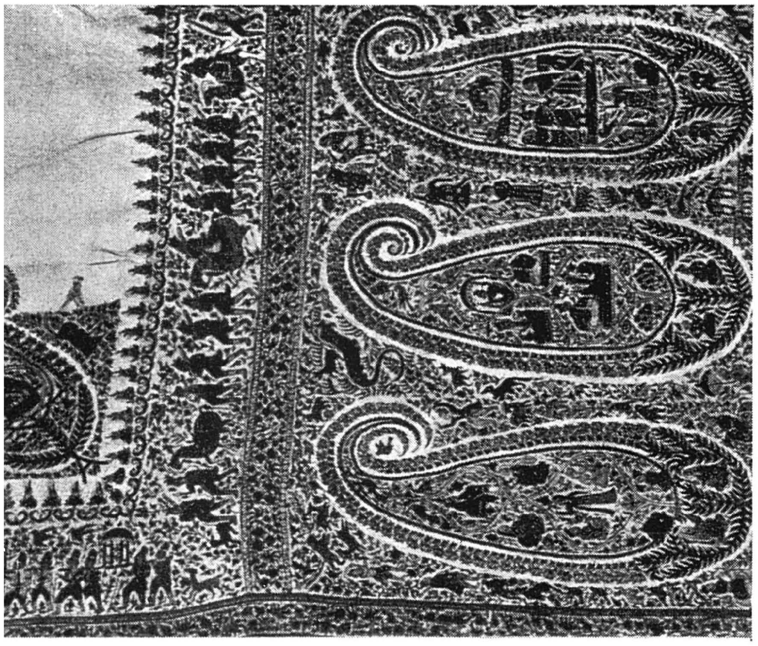
Fifty Years Ago

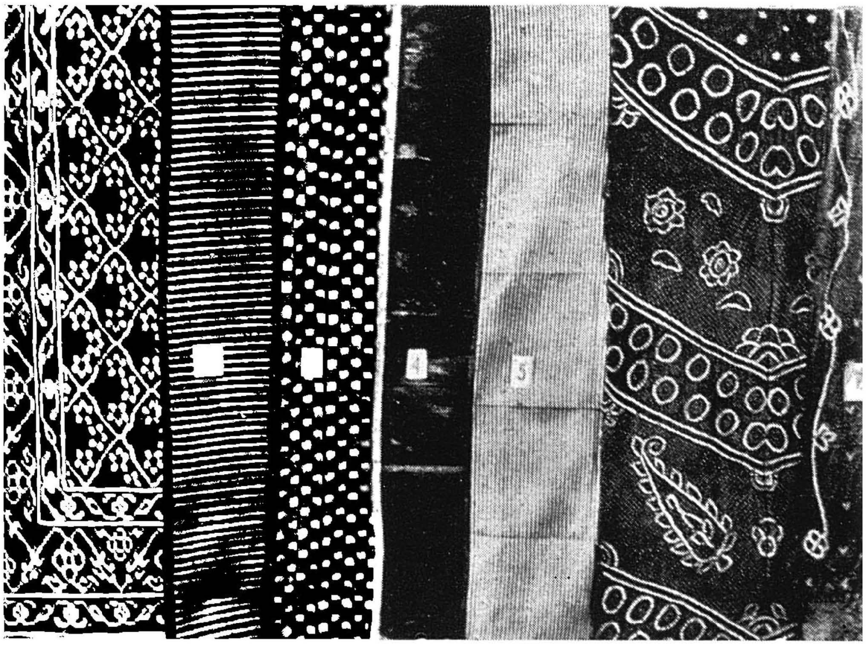
The first all-India Arts and Crafts Exhibition was held in the Kudsia Gardens, in 1902. Sir George Watt, Director of the Exhibition, prepared a detailed catalogue of it. In the Preface he says, "This work has been written, primarily as a Catalogue and Guide to the Indian Art Exhibition, but a secondary purpose has been kept clearly in view, namely, its possible future use as a simple and practical account of the more noteworthy art industries of India." From this exhaustive catalogue a few of the exhibits have been reproduced here. Some of these are not as detailed as they should be, but this was unavoidable as reproduction had to be made from the photographs in the catalogue.

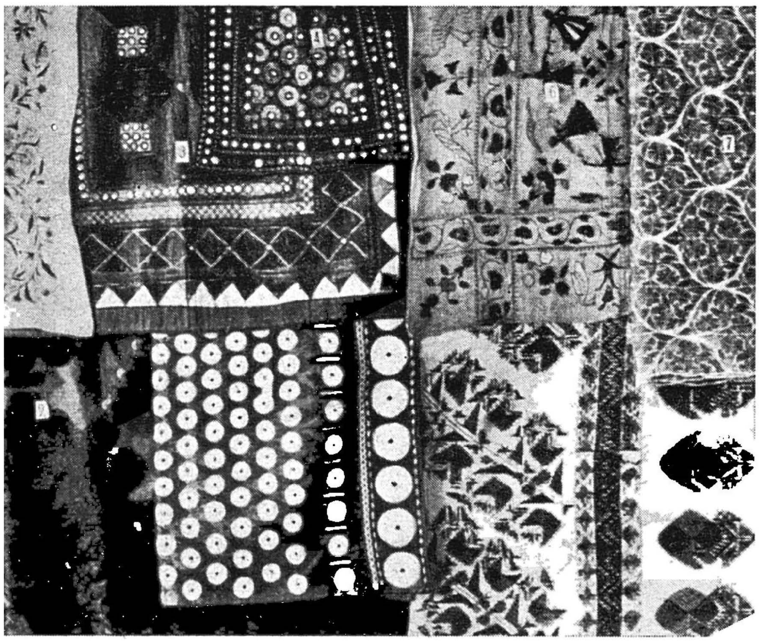
Silver filigree from Orissa

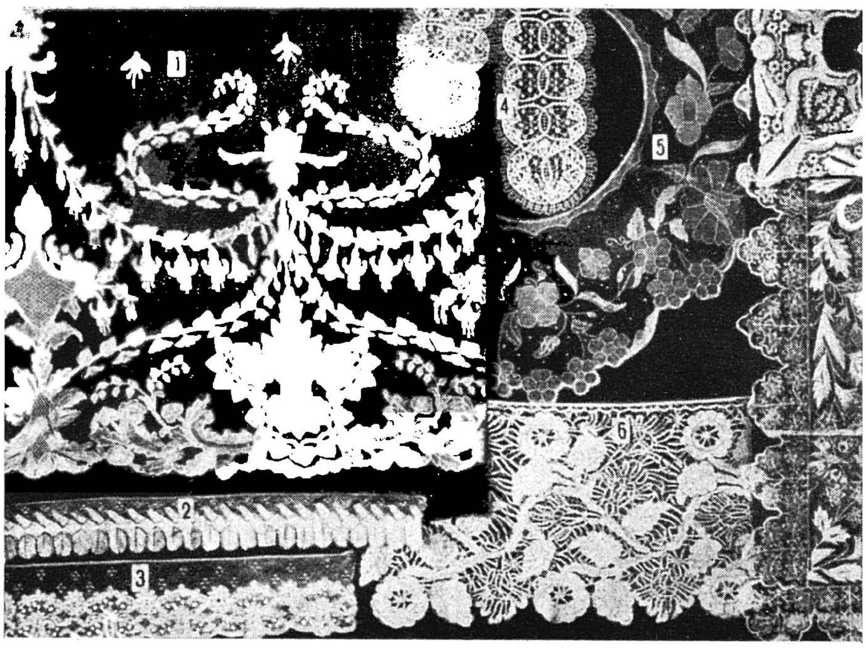












A carpet from Bikaner
Needlework on a Kashmiri shawl
Darn-stitch embroidery

Chalukyan carpet from South India
Tie-dyed fabrics
Network and lace

Ivory work from Delhi

Ivory

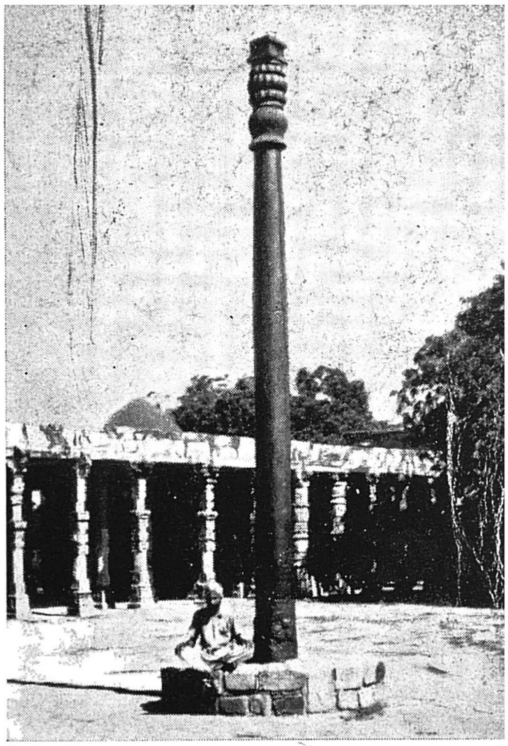
An inscription at Sanchi (200 B.C.) records the guild of ivory carvers of Vidisa, modern Besnagar in Gwalior, dedicating a bas-relief which they had carved. Paes, a Portuguese traveller, has described a chamber in the Vijaynagar palace as being "all of ivory, as well the chamber as the walls from top to bottom, and the pillars of the cross—timbers had roses and flowers of lotuses all of ivory and all well executed, so that there could not be better."

For sheer elegance and fine craftsmanship the ivories of Mysore and Travancore are highly prized. Murshidabad and Cuttuck still keep up to their old tradition of producing fine ivories. One of the striking ivory panels produced in South India has found a place in the National Museum of Florence.

Carved images of mythological interest, nudes, scenes from contemporary life and articles like combs, caskets, cigarette boxes, necklaces, bangles, chessmen, toys, paper cutters and the like are produced in ivory. In East Punjab, Amritsar, Patiala, Ambala and Ludhiana produce delicate but durable ivory articles. In Bengal, Calcutta and Murshidabad are known for minute ornamentation. The ivories of Delhi have a popular tourist appeal.

The best work of inlaid ivory may be seen in the Golden Temple of Amritsar. Inlaid work on sandalwood, tortoise shell and horn is produced at many centres in North and South India.

Mats from strips of ivory are woven in Delhi, Bharatpur, Murshidabad and Tipperah.



The iron pillar, Delhi

Metalware

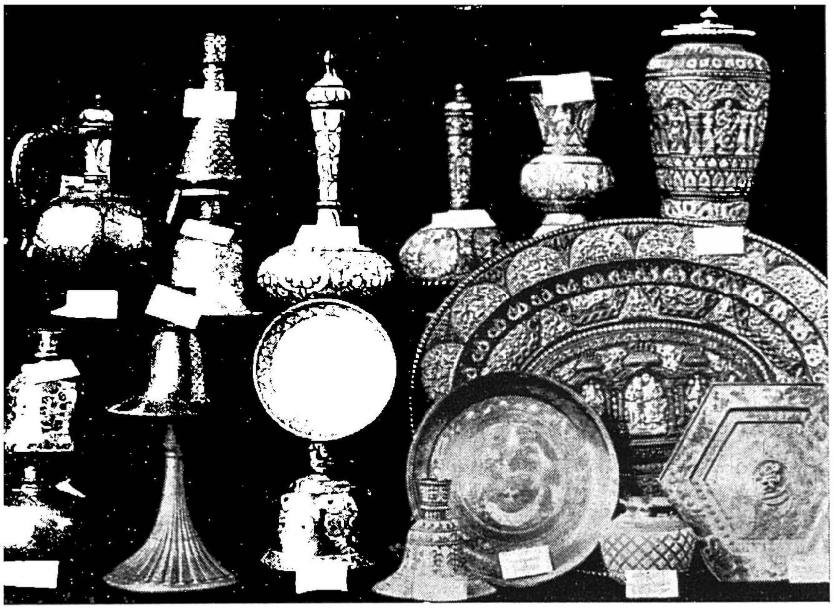
The Iron Pillar at the Kutub Minar in Delhi shows that Indian craftsmen knew the process of making rustless steel in the fourth century A.D. Until some years ago the engraving and carving of iron and steel was an important handicraft, the best work being done in South India and in Rajputana.

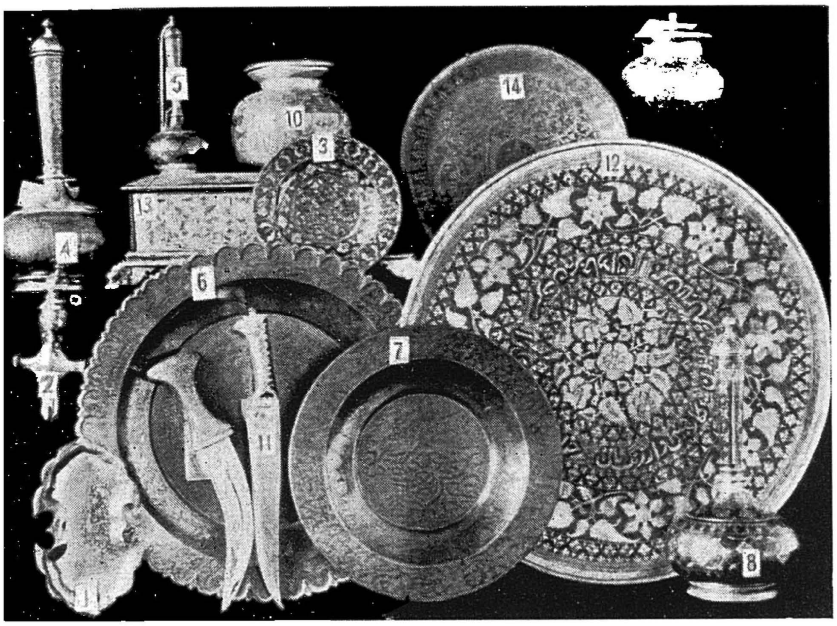
The *cire perdue* process of casting copper or bronze was perfected in the South. The image to be cast was first modelled in wax. A thick coating of clay was wrapped round the wax model. Later when the wax model was melted a hollow mould was left in the clay. Into this the alloy was poured. When the metal had cooled the clay covering was removed and the figure finished and chased. These striking bronzes of South India were produced under the inspiration of Shaivism and were orginially made of an alloy of gold, silver, copper, lead and tin. Today only copper is used.

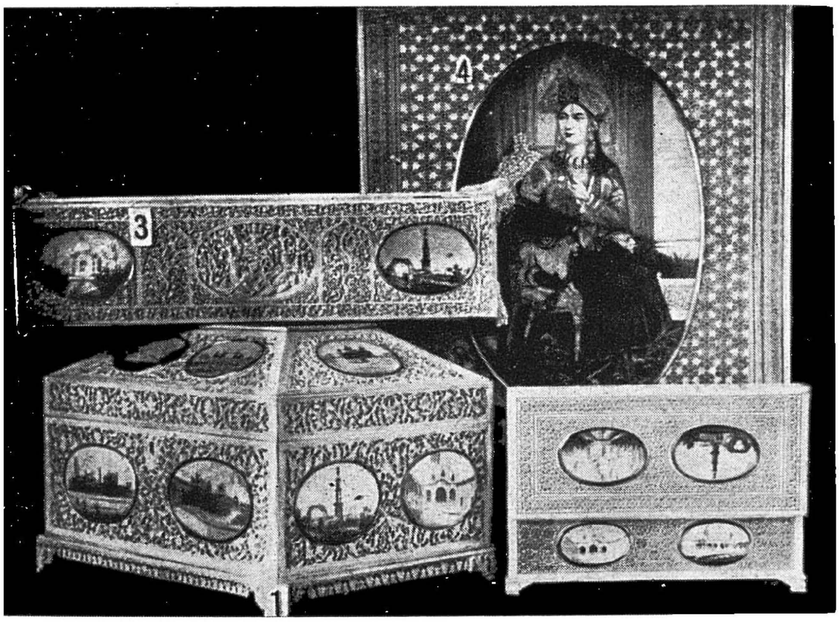
Bidri is a kind of damascene work in which one metal surface is inlaid with another. It takes its name from Bidar its original home. Lucknow, Purnea and Murshidabad are other important centres. Apart from the richness and variety of its designs the beauty of *Bidri* ware lies in the striking contrast between the black base and the metals inlaid.

A solution of copper sulphate is applied to the surface of the vessel which turns black. The design is etched on the black surface with a steel point. Then with hammer and chisel the pattern is scooped out and made smooth and very thin pieces of gold or silver plate or gold or silver wire inlaid in the grooves. It is finally polished and the lustre of the inlay stands out against the black surface.

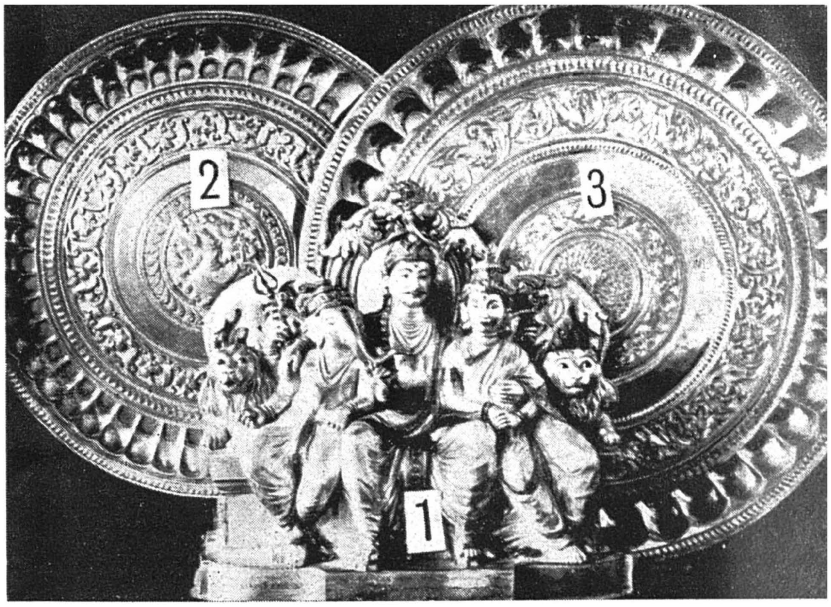
Whereas previously only a few articles, *e.g.*, *hukkas*, betel boxes, goblets, flower vases and trays were made of *Bidri* work, now a whole host of articles are produced which are in demand abroad. Book ends, menu card holders, tea pots, cigarette cases, ash trays, decanter stands,

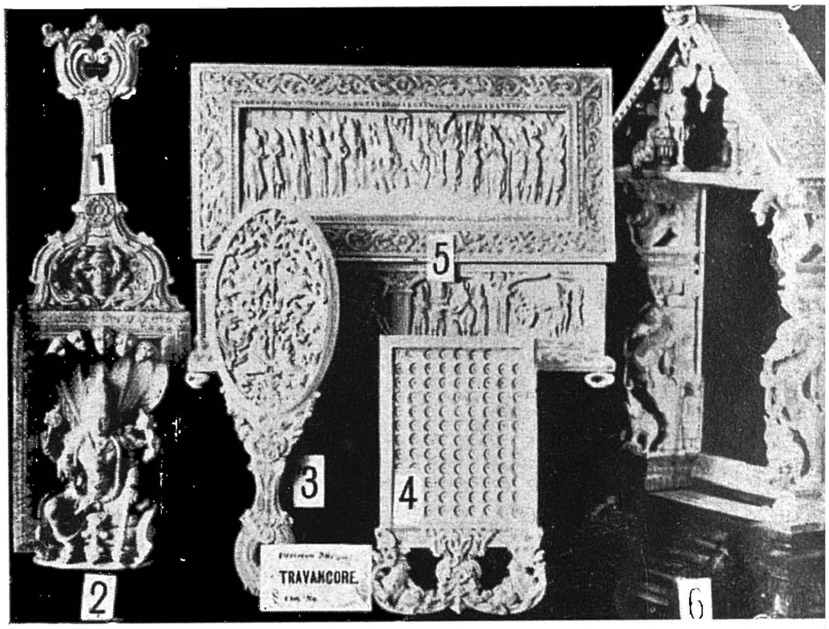


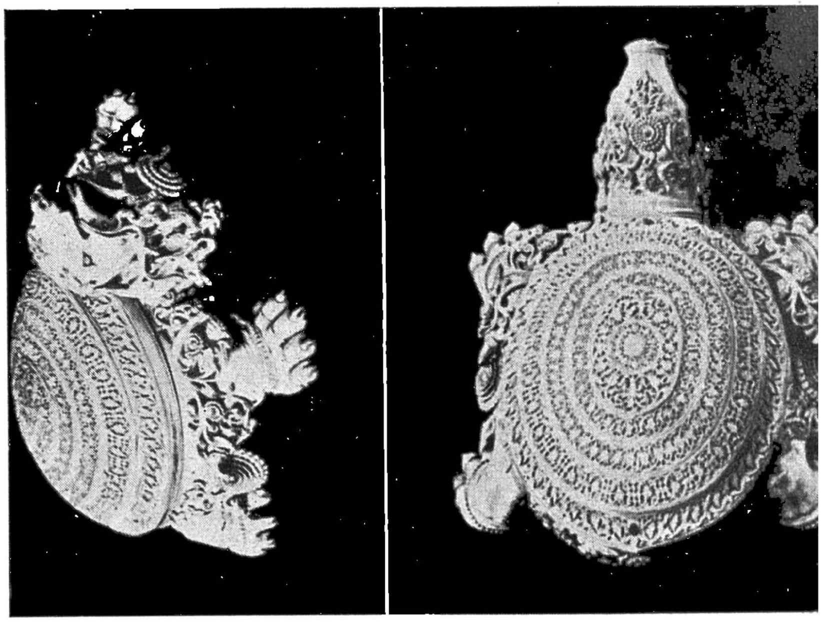




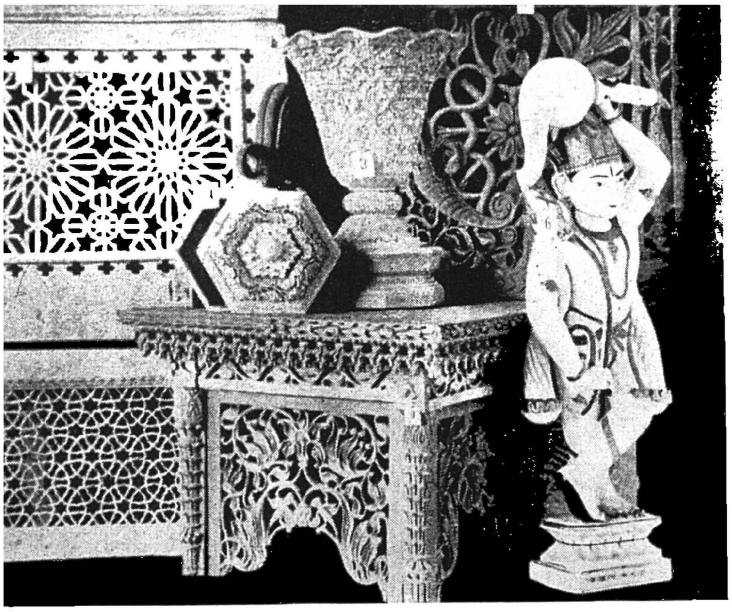
Encrusted metalware
Damascene ware
Miniature painting on ivory

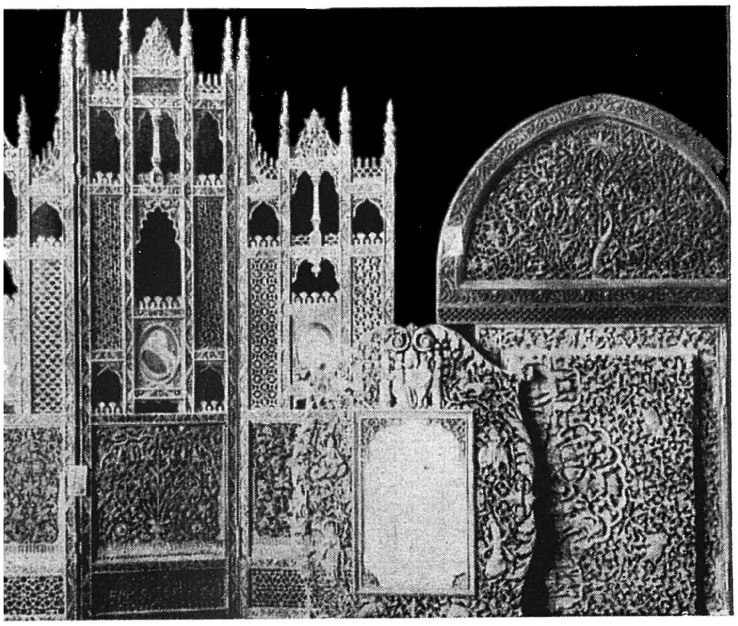






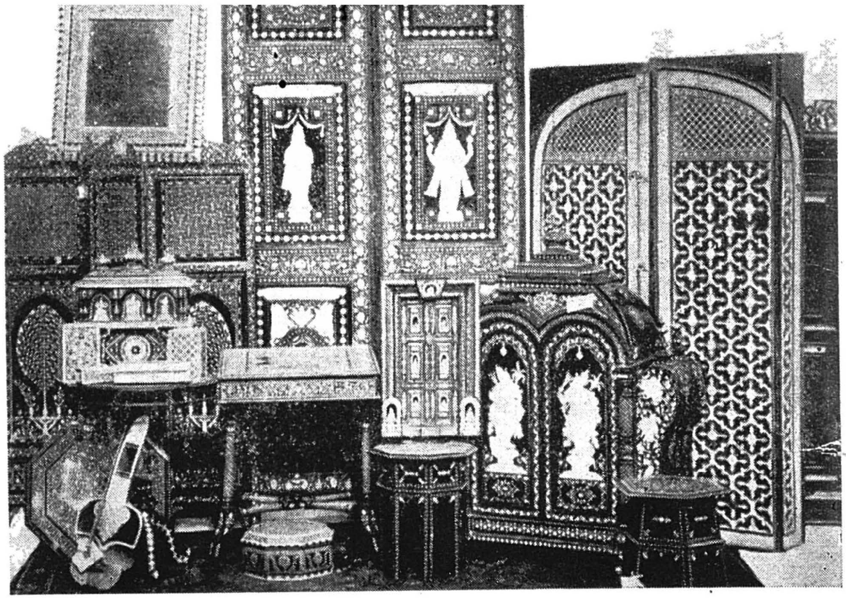
Bijapur silver
Travancore ivories
Old ivory from Orissa

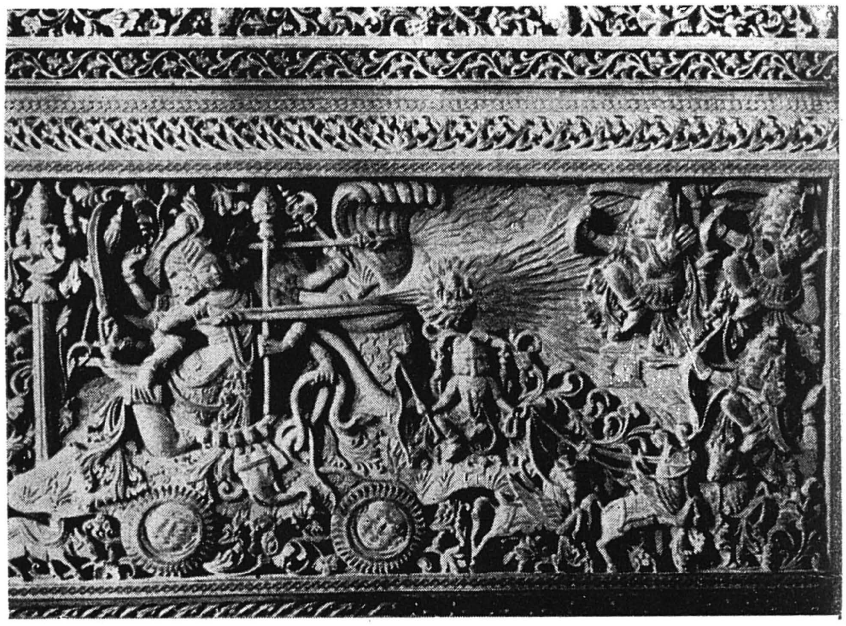




Indian stonework

Sandalwood-carving from Bombay





Wood-inlaying with ivory and bone

Sandalwood-carving from Mysore

OUR OTHER PUBLICATIONS

★

THE HANDBOOK OF INDIA . TRAVANCORE-COCHIN REGIONAL GUIDE . . . RAJASTHAN . . . SANTINIKETAN . . . INDIAN ART THROUGH THE AGES . . . OUR ROADS . . . OUR CONSTITUTION . . . HOMAGE . . . AFTER PARTITION . . . MILLIONS ON THE MOVE . . . MUSCLE CAN DO IT—THE STORY OF NILOKHERI . . . LEARNING TO EARN AT ARAB-KI-SARAI DEFENDING KASHMIR KASHMIR CALLING . . . THE CHENNA KESAVA TEMPLE AT BELUR . . . THE FIRST YEAR . . . THE SECOND YEAR . . . THE THIRD YEAR . . . THE FIFTH YEAR . . . INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER . . . YOUR RIGHTS AS A VOTER . . A CAREER IN THE ARMED FORCES . . . PROJECTS FOR PLENTY . . . MORE FROM MOTHER EARTH . . SQUARE DEAL FOR LABOUR . . . DEMOCRACY ON THE MARCH . . . THE RAILWAYS GO AHEAD . . . ON THE HOME FRONT . . . BUILDING A SOUND ECONOMY . FOR BETTER HEALTH . . . DEFENDING OUR FRONTIERS . . PROGRESS OF SCIENCE . . . EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY . FOR SPEEDIER COMMUNICATION . DILWARA TEMPLES . . . FACTS ABOUT INDIA . . . FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN (PEOPLE'S EDITION) . . ASPECTS OF BROADCASTING IN INDIA *and many more*

★

THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
Government of India, Old Secretariat, DELHI—8